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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

Ebdane in, Soriquez out

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday appointed National Security Adviser Hermogenes Ebdane to take over from Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez who is accused of taking kickbacks in government infrastructure projects.

She also ordered the President's Anti-Graft Commission to investigate the graft allegations, which Soriquez has denied.

Soriquez, who was not summoned to his old post of DPWH undersecretary, was sacked just two days after Agusan del Sur Rep. Rodolfo Plaza accused him of allegedly accepting P220 million in kickbacks from district officials.

The 1st DPWH secretary to be sacked since the second footpost of demanding a 15 percent kickback from contractors for projects implemented in their areas.

Soriquez said he is willing to answer all the charges and is open to any investigation.

"It's their (administration's) word against mine; they have to prove it," he told reporters before Mrs. Arroyo's announcement.

Malacañang stressed that Soriquez's sacking was not connected to Plaza's privilege speech.

"NE officials serve at the pleasure of the President with or without any cause. If the President says it's time to go, it's time to go. That's the President's prerogative. That's reason enough to make changes anytime," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a press briefing before the President made the announcement.

Bunye stressed that the DPWH changes were not an indictment of Soriquez.

"We're not prejudging this; this is still up for investigation. Let's not limit the recommendation of the PACC," he said.

Plaza alleged that Soriquez demanded P50,000 in monthly rent, kept from the DPWH's 173 districts, 15 percent "cash surplus" for government projects, and a 5 percent share from foreign-assisted projects.

EBDANE

Although Ebdane has long been rumored to be in line for the DPWH top post, the President's announcement caught a number of government officials by surprise, including Bunye, who had been defending Soriquez in an early morning radio interview.

"We have to wait for Secretary Soriquez's response because he was asked by the President to answer all the accusation point by point," he said.

Bunye said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had informed Soriquez of his return to his old post vacated by Ebdane.

Ebdane's staff last served as National Security Adviser by Presidential Chief of Staff Norberto Gonzales, who held the post last year.

Bunye said the President has yet to choose her next Chief of Staff.

Ebdane's appointment is expected to receive fears of increasing militarization of the Cabinet because of the President's preference for appointing ex-generals.

But Francis Ortiz, executive vice president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce, approved of Ebdane's appointment.

"His think he is the right person for the job because of his engineering background. We think he can do a good job as the DPWH as unemployed by his good track record in getting other highway infrastructure projects during his term," Ortiz said.

At the DPWH main foot down office, publicist officials and employees cheered, applauded and thanked Heaven when they learn they heard of Soriquez's relief.

Assistant Secretary Raul Asis, spokesperson of the "Group of 27" key public works officials who openly denied the President's accusations against Soriquez, said Ebdane is okay and trustworthy were among the DPWH office, shaking the hands of the employees. With a report from Jerome Aning and AFP

Ligot's wife bought condo

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE HOUSE committee on national defense yesterday produced documents showing that the wife of a retired three-star general had bought an expensive condominium unit in Metro Manila.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Rodolfo Galang, committee chair, furnished reporters with copies of the letter of Assistant Secretary for registry of deeds in Rizal, and the Condominium Certificate of Title showing that Erlinda Ligot, wife of Lt. Gen. Jacinto Ligot, owned a condominium unit at the Ramona in Makati. The market price as of April 2000 was P720 million.

The documents showed that Erlinda subsequently sold it in August 2003 to Eduardo Gutierrez, who turned out to be her brother.

At the last committee hearing on corruption in the military, Ligot, a former military comptroller, refused to answer a query from Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte how his wife was able to purchase an expensive condominium unit.

Ligot invoked his right against self-incrimination, saying he was no longer answering questions from the committee about his alleged unexplained wealth.

He did not reply to a commission from a committee member that his wife received 28 times with Renato Reyes, wife of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, when the latter was still chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and later secretary of national defense.

Today and he would ask the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate Santos to determine his financial capacity to buy the condominium unit and to find out whether he was acting as a dummy of the Ligot couple.

Ligot's questionable assets included a shaded house at No. 9182 Hinoman Avenue in Buena Park, California worth $185,000 and another one worth $150,000 which he purchased in California in 2003.

Based on reports, Ligot's top declarations also showed he owned a poultry on an eight-hectare property in Bukidnon worth P5 million.

His children, Miguel and Rina, both in their early 20s, were found to have purchased one parcel of property in two barangays in Malaybalay—a fine hectare lot in Barangay Sidangan and a four-hectare property in Sitio Kalinga-an in Barangay Dapao.

Susan Roces: GMA afraid of the truth

ACTRESS Susan Roces, the widow of movie idol Fernando Poe Jr., yesterday accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of being "afraid of the truth" by repeating her bid to administer her late husband in his election protest at the Presidential Electoral Tribunal.

The President had asked the Supreme Court to junk the FPJ protest to allow Roces to continue with Poe's election protest.

In a reply to the President's petition, Roces asked the high court to dismiss Mrs. Arroyo's objections and to allow her to substitute for her dead husband.

Roces said Mrs. Arroyo was a "presumptuous President, afraid of the truth, scared of reality, fearful of correct results, uncertain of her claimed victory, hiding behind the wall of presidential tenure."

Her lawyers said that with the death of Poe, the PET would be expected to resolve soon the issue of whether to allow the substitution or to dismiss the protest altogether.

Roces said she was pursuing the election protest so the FPJ supporters "can finally know if the entire people of the Philippines were correct when we truly voted upon and willed our then legitimately elected as President of the Republic."

She disputed Mrs Arroyo's claim that continuing with the election protest would result in political instability, saying that it was the President's alleged intransigence that placed "the country in limbo ... in a more unstable situation than it already is."

Phillip C. Tubeza

Enrile warns Palace: Don't tamper with statistics

By Michael Lim Ubac

STOP fooling the people.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile yesterday cautioned Malacañang against tampering with government statistics and economic and social data in order it appear that the country is progressing.

Enrile said the public had been fed with conflicting statistics and "rosy reports about the economy."

To ensure the integrity of government data, Enrile is pushing for the creation of an independent statistics office.

"The administration should stop fooling the people if it wants economic stability. It should also stop fooling itself to it could prepare better and more realistic legislative proposals to get our country in the right track," said the senator.

He also slammed the administration for celebrating the 'appreciation of the peso in recent days, saying it had nothing to do with "stronger economic fundamentals" as claimed by Malacañang, but due to the strengthening of the US dollar in the world market.

Enrile pointed out that the National Coordination and Statistics Board had reported that the incidence of poverty had been reduced from 33.7 percent of all families in 2000 to only 24.7 percent of all families in 2003.

But the National Statistics Office (NSO) had reported that the average real family income actually fell from P136,000 in 2000 to P136,594 in 2003 (from P145,125 in 2000, he said.

Enrile explained that the NSO data attributed the declining family income to inflation which eroded the real purchasing power.

"Because of inflation, the average family tightened its belt, cutting expenditures on food and other necessities by 8 percent," said the senator.

Manalao calls for peace and social harmony during Amon Jadid or Muslim New Year

LANAO del Sur governor Ahmad Bashier Manalao has called on the entire Muslim world to work for peace and social harmony among fellow Muslims, Christians and other ethnic and racial groups as the Islamic world celebrated yesterday the start of Amon Jadid, or Muslim New Year.

"In behalf of the constituents of Lanao del Sur, I would like to join hands with all Muslim brothers and sisters worldwide to sow the seeds of peace and social harmony with all our fellow men during the Amon Jadid so that prosperity would blossom in our land," Manalao said.

"Let peace and development live in our midst and may the blessings of our Almighty Allah be upon us all this year," he added.

Manalao's greetings came as the Filipino-Chinese community also celebrated yesterday the start of the Lunar New Year (Year of the Rooster). His message of peace came also at a time when government forces and the Abu Sayyaf group resumed their fighting in the south recently, resulting in heavy casualties to both camps.

Manalao is the 17th governor of Lanao del Sur, a province in north central Mindanao, with a population of about 673,000.

He is the first duly elected vice governor who became governor by succession, following the death of Mamintal Adiong Sr. last year.

As the new chief executive of the province, he has embarked on various economic, health and social welfare programs for his constituents aimed at further improving their living conditions.

The connecting of the provincial roads in the towns of Marantao, Piagapo and Saguiaran were completed under his watch, and so with the concreting of the roads in Bumbaran, Buadi Sacayo, and Pagayawan.

Local residents said the improved road network has significantly increased trade and commerce in their areas, providing better and livelihood opportunities for them.

In his first 100 days in office, Manalao has also instructed his health workers to serve and provide free medicines to thousands of poor outpatients in his province and committed 18,233 families to the provincial health program under the Medicare Para sa Mga.

The governor is now seeking assistance from the national government and foreign development agencies to carry out various projects, including the construction of irrigation facilities, public markets, roads and a water sewerage system for Lanao del Sur.

Manalao, also a preacher and teacher who finished his Islamic studies in Egypt and the Middle East is known to be moderate and pragmatic Muslim leader with deep concern for women, children and population issues.

NEWSBRIEFS

SC replaces Sandoval

THE SUPREME Court on Tuesday replaced Intelligence Assistant Director Sandoval as member of the anti-graft court's special division hearing the plunder and perjury cases of former President Joseph Estrada. The high court designated Executive Judge Teresita Dy-Liacco Flores of the anti-graft court's 1st Division as Sandoval's replacement. The tribunal also designated Associate Justice Josefina S. Guevara-de Dios's alternate. The court's decision to replace Sandoval came after the justice ordered by DBM-AMLAC to explain why he has P6.2 million in his bank account in his retirement from the special division due to his alleged health problems. Philip C. Tubeza

Charges vs 8 importers filed

THE DEPARTMENT of Customs yesterday filed criminal charges against eight importers who allegedly smuggled into the country P172.2 million worth of cars. Edu Dizon, canned goods and rubber dealer; Lauren Reynaldo Hindi, dispute California accessories head of the BoC intelligence and enforcement group; president Hendrick Lee; Chief of Finance Corpin; Ronald Guangco, Ronaldo Pangandian, Armando T. Ruiz, Akram Mohammad Dimaday, Eugenio Jimbon, Katherine Yu Gabriel, and Rosario Dilet. The confiscated goods included a Toyota Lexus, a Toyota Mark X, a Honda Civic, a Nissan Cargo, a Nissan Patrol, "Mercedes Benz" cars, assorted clothes, and used electronics, considered as electrical materials. Philip C. Tubeza

ADB, Sweden mull AIDS fund

DAVOS: Sweden and the Asian Development Bank are in discussions on setting up a $100 million trust fund to help combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region, Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson said. The Swedish ambassador to the Philippines Monika Markovic announced Wednesday. Markovic said the Swedish government has pledged some $114 million to the trust which will be administered by the ADB. She added that the ADB will formally establish the trust at a meeting between ADB officials in the Philippines later this month. Markovic said the trust would not only help countries like the Philippines, where the officially recorded incidence of HIV/AIDS is quite low, but other countries in the region. AFP

3 NPA rebels killed in Mindanao

THREE communist guerrillas were slain and seven were captured in a clash with government forces on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, a military spokesperson said Wednesday. A 64-strong unit of the New People's Army fought with government troops near the town of Kitcharao on Tuesday, resulting in the killing of three rebels and the wounding and capture of another, military spokesperson Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual said. Two other NPA rebels and two soldiers were slain in another clash in Mindanao over the weekend. AFP

81 detainees 4 Vietnamese

THE BUREAU of Immigration yesterday barred four Vietnamese refugees from leaving the country for allegedly using fake Philippine passports. Bureau Associate Commissioner Jaime Morfe said three were arrested while the fourth managed to escape while being brought to the Bataan Immigration office for investigation. He said they were one of three apprehended were turned over to the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The four, identified by Morfe as Nguyen Thanh Tuyen, Nguyen Anh Tuan and Nguyen Anh Tuan, were detained in the BI jail in Bicutan. Tarpon City Jerome Aning from news agencies and Philippine newspapers

Senate OKs '05 budget of DENR

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE SENATE finally approved yesterday the 2005 spending package of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) after three days of intense deliberation and grilling by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Secretary Michael Defensor.

Deliberations on the DENR budget were unusually long compared to other departments, until there was perception that it had something to do with the ongoing tiff between Pimentel and Defensor.

Pimentel last month filed a letter against Defensor for failing to "act decisively on illegal logging operations in Quezon and Aurora, provinces hardest hit by last year's deadly floods largely blamed on illegal logging.

Pimentel yesterday is standing in the way of the speedy approval of the budget, lamented the senator, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The same senator said other senators had been appealing to Malacañang to "cool it" and not to politicize the DENR budget, which had been set for floor time Monday. There were four or five more government agencies whose budgets were still up for discussion as of press time.

Late on Tuesday afternoon yesterday, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin's budget was still on the floor questioning the P5.3 billion budget proposal of the DENR, which Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., chair of the Senate finance committee, sponsored.

Madrigal did not only tell Villar that she would be asking 200 questions on the department's proposal, but also castigated Defensor for issuing separate statements against her in the media.

Later on, DENR's budget passed the Senate scrutiny, paving the way for the discussion of the spending package of other government agencies. With a report from Mike Lim Ubac

DOCS TOP LIST

Thousands of rich Pinoys not paying taxes, says prof

[illegible] of thousands of the Philippines' richest citizens are paying little or no income tax, helping to erode the government's finances and protecting a culture of cheating, a tax expert said yesterday.

This group comprises the top 5 percent economic bracket who earn money through businesses or are self-employed, said tax professor Teresa Aleclo of the University of Asia and the Pacific.

Aleclo singled out doctors as the prime culprits.

International credit rating agency Standard and Poor's last month downgraded the Philippines' sovereign credit ratings for a month, citing the government's failure to shore up its public finances.

Government revenues as a percentage of gross domestic product stood at an estimated 14.1 percent in 2004, among the lowest in Asia.

"In our tax system [the self-employed] easily need supporting [illegible]. That's where there are really big leakages," Aleclo said at a news conference.

He said income tax payments accounted for about 10 percent of the government's total tax revenues. But people on salaries shouldered a disproportionately higher load with an effective tax rate of 20.04 percent, even though most earned less than people with [illegible] income.

Aleclo said salaried workers paid P76 billion in income taxes in 2003 compared to just P7 billion paid by people with business incomes. The two groups tend to pay about the same amount, he added.

High earners either failed to pay taxes or used legal means to reduce their tax burdens, he said. The wealthy have long complained that taxes would end up being the pockets of corrupt politicians and officials.

"That's a basic concern. You have to first fulfill your duty [illegible] then you can complain," Aleclo said. "I think we have too many complainers here and too few honest taxpayers." AFP

RP, Japan hold talks on defense cooperation

[illegible] and the Philippines held their first talks on possible defense cooperation with an emphasis on counterterrorism, a senior military official said yesterday.

A six-member delegation from Japan's foreign ministry and Defense Agency arrived late Tuesday and will hold talks until Thursday with Chief Philippine Commodore Ariel Arnaud Bernardo, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Efraim Love Adan.

"For the first time, talks are ongoing between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the government of Japan with the objective of looking at possibly enhancing the cooperation between the [illegible] forces and the Department of National Defense," Adan said in opening.

"We are still going to look at the areas of cooperation that will possibly be enhanced... areas of disaster management and relief [illegible] to cooperate in the area against terrorism," he added.

"We are only discussing what areas we can cooperate," he said, adding that "preliminary talks are still ongoing. We cannot give further information at this time."

He would not elaborate on what form this defense cooperation could take.

So, would there be joint military exercises between the Philippines' armed forces and the Japanese [illegible] military in the future?

"It has not reached that point yet. This is the first time our governments are talking and we cannot talk about that," Adan said.

The Japanese delegation is headed by Shunichi Nishimiya, deputy director general of the Asian and Oceanian affairs bureau at the foreign ministry.

The Philippines, then a US commonwealth, was brutally occupied by Japanese forces during World War II. Japan is now the largest source of official [illegible] to the country. Reports from AFP and Kyodo [illegible]

You'll take exams, CAP assures studes

Tell plan holders real score, pre-need firm dared

By Lolgo & del Puerto

TROUBLED of student plan holders of the cash-strapped Col-lege Assurance Plan are assured of making their final examinations this semester at least, a GAP official said yesterday.

Some 30,000 holders of the CAP's scholarship plans are currently enrolled at colleges and universities nationwide.

GAP spokesperson Bobbi Gil said the pre-need firm was doing two things to ensure that students are able to take the finals and the final exams," Gabe said at the weekly Guided Tuesdays press briefing.

She have already supplied by 41 banks. The memorandum of agreement has been executed, including the loan agreement with First American Investments," he said.

GAP, the country's biggest pre-need firm, is expected to have received a trust fund deficiencies of P17.2 billion, putting into question doubt its ability to meet the tuition needs of some 750,000 educational plan holders.

The Securities and Exchange Commission last since suspended GAP's dealer's license, stopping it from selling any more plans to the public, but has pulling the firm's finances in disarray.

To put its financial house in order, GAP plans to borrow P3.065 million from the Bernabe Investment.

It also plans to improve its capital adequacy requirements by proposing to swap shares for a 2,000-hectare property of the Seven Circle and Seven Square property firm owned by known money lender.

Gabe claimed that GAP had been informed by the SEC that it was "almost posing [a no-objection" to GAP's loan-cushion agreement with Bel.

The first transfer, which could take place by the end of February or early March, amounts to about P40 million, Gabe said.

"In case there are delays, we have negotiated the use to convert some of your fixed assets into cash," he said.

GAP's trust fund, the money that it is required by law to set aside to manage and grow to meet future obligations to plan holders, stood at P8.3 billion, Gabe said.

Of the P1.6 billion in checks that GAP issued since the first semester up to December 2004, only P40 million remained unencashed, he said.

Gabe said GAP was also eyeing how to force other loans and sale of assets to raise enough money to meet its obligations.

But P10 billion [itself would not be enough, he said. GAP was already making arrangements with universities and colleges so as to assist plan holders would be allowed to take the final exams.

The head of the Int. Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion said. GAP should tell its plan holders what to do financial situation of the company is.

"Public information, disclosure and transparency is the first thing that I think you should do from day one," Concepcion told Gabe.

Concepcion also wanted to find out how the trustee banks which manages the GAP's trust fund had invested the money.

Concepcion said the government should have been "monitoring."

He said he would have the banks subpoenaed by the Senate which is conducting its investigation into the finances of GAP.

Concepcion wanted to know why GAP funds were invested in the Mexico Hall Transit and Camp Aguinaldo Hay at "huge prices." MRT and Camp Aguinaldo Hay are sister companies of GAP to which a big chunk of GAP's money was invested.

"If that's coming out is that investments were made not as a result of the good plan holder is getting," he said.

AFP reviews award of Medal for Valor to Buan

By Alexis Pajo

BUAN

THE MEDAL for Valor awarded by the military to former New People's Army captive Lt. Col. Noel Buan is now under review.

Abigaltan that procedure some are properly observed during the deliberations prompted the review of the award, the highest given by the military for gallantry in combat, according to Armed Forces spokesperson Lt. Gen. Efraim Ichiocan yesterday.

Buan received the Medal for Valor from President Macapagal-Arroyo in December 2004.

Ichiocan then ordered the deputy chief of the command for operations to study the process pertaining the award.

"There are allegations that it was not done properly in the committee will look into that and give a report to the CS (chief of staff)," Ichiocan said.

Buan reminded by reporters that it was Mr Arroyo herself who awarded the medal to Buan, Arlas said: "Sacred Ahs has given means how to investigate if other officers are saying the true, that the procedure was not followed. There is nothing wrong with that so there will be no more questions."

A branch of the medal for the AFP's vice chief of staff and other senior military officials involved and deliberated on the awarding. Recipients of the Medal for Valor are given a P100,000 cash award, a medal, on top of their monthly salary and priority in promotion.

A member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 2004, Buan rose to fame when he was captured by the New People's Army in 1999, when he was then the intelligence officer of the Southern Command, while hunting down communist rebels in Southern Tagalog. He was released a year later by the CPP's regime in Mindoro following a series of negotiations.

In April of 2003, Buan led the 1st Scout Ranger Battalion in a clash against the Abu Sayyaf group in Basilan that resulted in the death of 400 leader Hamarsyl Sali and six other extremists.

According to his cousin, he "personally planned and led" the assault. The station also said that Buan, despite being wounded, "was able to direct and conduct the rest of his troops the fire fight and (caused) withdrawal."

NLEx starts full operations today; toll rates up

THE NLEX North Luzon Expressway was set to start full operations late yesterday under the Manila North Tollways Corp., which took over the management of the modernized highway from the debt-ridden Philippine National Construction Corp.

MNTC president John E. Gil Jr. said the opening of the NLEx to motorists and the development of nine interchanges, 20 upgraded toll plazas and modernized roads.

But the toll hike, however, already took effect yesterday, as MNTC began implementing its new rates.

Motorists using the facility will be paying rates that are 100 percent more than current fees, after the Toll Regulatory Board approved the other day a 300-percent toll adjustment sought by the MNTC.

Class 1 vehicles will be charged P2.40 per km compared to the current P0.52 per km.

MNTC assistant vice president Marlene Cobos said the benefits and savings from using the expressway would outweigh the increase in toll rates.

The MNTC unveiled early by the UP Planning and Development Research Foundation. (UP Planades) which said that even with the higher toll rates, motorists would enjoy savings of up to P7.44 per km because of reduced vehicle operating cost.

The Tollways Management Corp. president offhand told reporters earlier in which motorists can now avoid lost cars, eight seconds per vehicle.

It's operations and maintenance center will be using more than 20 cameras to monitor 84 km stretch of highway 24 hours a day.

The TMC can provide immediate response—vehicles 20 minutes—to any accident, whether mechanical or medical, with its 16 patrol vehicles, nine motorcycle patrols, two ambulances from Caloocan Sentosa, and three tow trucks from the automotive associations of the Philippines on standby, said TMC president Jesse Mahinay.

The new NLEx is a joint venture of the Lopez Group's First Philippine Infrastructure Development Corp., the PNCC, the Hyatt-based Egis of France, and Leighton Asia of Australia.

ANNOUNCING THE PARTNERSHIP OF

COLLEGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF MANILA - CENTEX

HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Starting SY 2005-06, COLLEGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OF MANILA (CHSM)-CENTEX High School Education will be a coeducational high school with the main site at 163 E Mendiola, Manila.

The CHSM-CENTEX High School Education will be key to the formation of a culture of peace in a seamless society of God-loving, service-oriented, and civic-minded citizens. The SSpS Provincial Leadership, CENTEX and the Ayala Foundation play lead roles in the partnership with the support of the CHSM students, parents, guardians, High School Student Council of Leaders and the CENTEX students, their respective parents, three curriculum volunteers and master teachers.

CENTEX, currently a public elementary education given to deserving children, is ably supported by the Ayala Foundation which gives the students free tuition fee, school supplies, uniform and a feeding program. Now that the first batch of CENTEX elementary students will be graduating by March, 2005, said students will be entering high school by June of this year. College of the Holy Spirit of Manila has been CHOSEN to educate the CENTEX scholars for their high school studies.

CHSM-CENTEX at Mendiola, Manila is NOT EXCLUSIVE to the CENTEX scholars. It also accepts other interested and qualified high school applicants (boys and girls). Interested applicants are requested to visit the CHSM Guidance Center to register for the examination and submit all admissions requirements one week before the date of the examination.

For more information, please write or call guidance@chsmanila.edu.ph, 7150021 / 7151981 / 7151988

ADMIRAL Thomas Fargo, commander of the US Pacific Command, boards car following his visit to Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City Wednesday. JOAN BONDOC

US admiral lauds RP moves on terror

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE SENIOR commander of all United States forces in the Pacific and Indian Ocean yesterday affirmed continuing US commitment to help the Philippines upgrade its military capability and combat terrorism, including the presence of the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah in Mindanao.

"I think the JI is the principal concern in the region and we're working very closely with the government of the Philippines to make sure that the JI is not present in the Philippines," Admiral Thomas Boulton Fargo, commander of the US Pacific Command, told reporters after his farewell call on President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday morning.

Fargo is ending his tour of duty as senior commander of the US military, air, ground and naval forces in the Pacific and Indian Ocean region, which accounts for more than 50 percent of the earth's surface, includes 16 time zones and borders 43 countries inhabited by more than 60 percent of the world's population.

As commander since May 2002, Fargo's responsibilities included oversight of all US military activities promoting peace and stability in the region, according to a statement from the US embassy.

For his impact on the Philippines, Fargo was conferred by the President the Philippine Legion of Honor, a military award given to a Filipino or foreign citizen in recognition of valuable and meritorious service in relation to the military affairs of the country.

Ms Arroyo hailed Fargo's role in "changing the face of Basilan," the playground of extremists linked to the JI and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network. US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone accompanied Fargo to the farewell call and awarding ceremonies.

"The partnership between our two countries under your command has really produced a lot of fruits and we appreciate the assistance of the regional command in various peace fronts and also our cooperation on our greater effort and success in the fight against terrorism," Ms Arroyo told Fargo in a 20-minute meeting before she pinned the Philippine Legion of Honor medal on him.

Fargo said Ms Arroyo's "excellent job" in formulating the Philippine Defense Reform Program had the full backing of Washington.

"I just had extensive discussions in Washington DC on it. I think it is a very well-formulated program that is properly funded and it's going to have a positive impact on the reform of the Philippine military," Fargo told the President, repeating the same to reporters.

Fargo said he was "deeply honored" by the award.

The US embassy statement said discussions between the President and Fargo centered on RP-US military-to-military security cooperation activities, including the Philippine Defense Reform Program, and enhancing sustained capacity to counter terrorism.

Asked what Ms Arroyo's message to US President George W. Bush was, Fargo said: "The President said first of all that she was very appreciative of the support that the US has provided. As you know, we do have a long-standing relationship. We work closely to improve the capability and the capacity of the AFP."

Part of Marcos loot spent

Front page A-1

trusted to the bureau of Treasury.

Tarlac Representative Jacinto Paras voted nay because monies credited for Republic wealth is earmarked for the agrarian reform program. Certain monies were taken in pursuance of that mandate but generally it is wrong to use it as a press conference.

Antonio Trillanes, another Magdalo lawmaker, rights group asserted that the Senate has a right to know how the money would be used.

"Where (Bautista) is expert to the Senate. We can ensure the human rights victims that there is money for us. Secretary Bautista should submit a report and he deemed to be the figures of the ill-gotten deposits and the $200 million for the human rights victims is intact," the senator said.

Senators Joseph Estrada and Panfilo Lacson also insisted that the money be used to compensate victims of human rights violations.

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Senators Joseph Estrada and Panfilo Lacson also insisted that the money be used to compensate victims of human rights violations.

House probe

Interim members of the House, some of them victims of human rights violations during the Marcos regime, have called for a congressional probe into the status of the $683 million in Marcos-linked deposits that had been deposited in numbered accounts in PNB.

They were Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teddy Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna, Liza Maza of Gabriela, Crispin Beltran and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna, Abraham Kahlil Mitra of Palawan, Lorenzo "Erin" Tañada III and Rafael Ramos of Quezon, Jocelyn Bolante of Zamboanga del Norte, Del de Guzman of Bukidnon, Bongbong "Bimmy" Marcos of Ilocos Norte, Eduardo Gullas of Northern Cebu, Rafael Lagman of Cebu and Edcel Lagman of the party-list AFE.

In House Resolution No. 279, they asked the House committee on banks and financial intermediaries chaired by Manuel Roxas, Arnie Lopez and the House committee on human rights headed by Rodolfo Valencia to join the investigation.

Money trail

In 1994, the Marcos assets were transferred from Swiss banks to PNB. In July 2003, the Supreme Court forfeited the money in favor of the government after it had ruled that it was ill-gotten.

In March 2004, the Department of Justice in Switzerland that $658 million of the amount was already with the Bureau of Treasury and can be be used for land reform.

Singapore bank

On Tuesday, however, PNB president Lorenzo Tan said the money was handed to the national treasury except for $22 million still stuck with West LB Singapore. About $20 million to $30 millionin in a retention fund.

Montano said it was the first time for him to hear that some of the money are still in Singapore.

He said people must have the status of the Marcos assets to prevent unauthorized disbursements and withdrawals.

Ebdane asked the President on Tuesday to draw proof that the $683 million forfeited to the government was still intact and was not used in her election campaign.

In HR 279, the authors said there was a need to know what exactly was the "separate special account to the general fund" under which the forfeited funds had been turned and recorded.

DBM to give accounting

They also asked the Bureau of Treasury, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and other concerned government agencies and banks to render a full report and accounting of the funds.

In Malacañang, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye could not give a detailed accounting of the $683 million in Marcos ill-gotten wealth.

"The money is there (and while the bank acts for the benefit of the former), the President is accountable to have part of the money controlled for the compensation of human rights victims," he said at a press briefing.

But Bunye said he was not in a position to give a detailed accounting of the $683 million that was forfeited in favor of the government.

He said the Department of Budget and Management could undertake the explanation.

He reiterated Bunye reminded reporters that the bulk of the money would go to agrarian reform as provided for in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

"The human rights victims will get their fair share. But it must be emphasized that the bulk of the proceeds will go to the land reform program," he said.

How was it spent?

"This will have an important role in pushing forward the gains we have already been getting in the countryside, as well as in the overall growth of the economy, which will draw in more investments to create jobs for our people," Bunye said.

Bunye earlier could not say how the President had set aside $200 million from the amount for the compensation of thousands pending unsettlement since EDSA.

"I believe he (Tan) is in better position would be sued for the claims," Bunye said.

"But what happened to the one that went to the agrarian reform, there was a spread"

Technically, the government can spend the money for land reform because that is provided by law, Bunye said.

"This is around P200 billion. It should go to land acquisition and land distribution," she said, and not to support services like the building of irrigation systems. The latter, according to Bunye, is the function of the Department of Agriculture.

Hallucinating

Senator Jinggoy Estrada said Ebdane is hallucinating when he claimed that the $683 million was still intact.

"Ang sinasabi ni Governor Ebdane, hindi pa nagagalaw ang pera, hindi pa nagagamit, ay hallucinating siya," Estrada said.

Senator Juan Ponce Enrile said Ebdane was merely trying to get media attention.

"Ang sinasabi ni Governor Ebdane, hindi pa nagagalaw ang pera, hindi pa nagagamit, ay hallucinating siya," Estrada said.

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Opposition in no hurry to impeach GMA

Front page A-1

"We do not want to rush the filing of a complaint because if it is done only to be weak and it gets dismissed, there is a one-year bar against filing a new one."

Speaker Jose de Venecia was quick to strike down the call for impeachment. "Even on the grounds it cited, such a move being contemplated will not prosper."

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles agreed with De Venecia, saying Pimentel's call was "all but dead."

"Senator Pimentel is a brilliant lawyer and he, of course, knows very well that his proposal will not fly. But he has every legal ground," Nograles said, adding:

"It won't fly. But it will make whatever remonstrance game we have had so far."

Prove it

Deputy Majority Leader Rep. Eduardo Gullas said the opposition should first prove that the alleged intrusions of the President were "culpable violations of the Constitution one thing to impeachment."

"We've seen some, and we don't expect to see any," he said.

Pabrikar Rep. Antonio Alvarez said simply: "No congressman will be agreeable (to endorsing) an impeachment complaint against President Arroyo."

By law, any impeachment complaint filed by one-third of the House members. The Senate serves as a tribunal once the complaint is submitted to it for hearing.

An impeachable official cannot be the subject of two impeachment complaints within one year.

The House can uphold the validity to have and substance of an impeachment complaint, or dismiss it through a one-third vote of all members.

Not a good time

Senate President Franklin Drilon said that he disagreed with his "esteemed colleague," and that this was not a good time for the nation to undergo yet another impeachment feud.

"It will only divide the Filipino people and negatively derail our bipartisan efforts toward putting our fiscal house in order to achieve national economic recovery," he said in a statement.

He also expressed confidence that Malacañang would be able to answer Pimentel's charges against the President.

He said "and every alleged issue is an impeachable offense."

In his own statement, Senate Majority leader Francis Pangilinan essentially made the same observation.

"Nanawagan lang ako sa mga kapatid na Senador Pi, upang tayo'y magkaisa sa harap ng mga pagsubok na ating kinakaharap ngayon," Pangilinan said.

Corrective measures

But Drilon still expressed that Ms Arroyo should take corrective measures regarding any of Pimentel's three accusations....laws alleged excess appointments of officials to the government and the Comelec's questioned purchase of new ballots with out authority from Congress.

The third accusation is the Pimentel's alleged use of the trust funds coined through the coco levy fund and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration for her election campaign.

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. also expressed doubt that any impeachment case filed against Ms Arroyo based on Pimentel's charges would prosper.

But he said this was because there were more substantial issues Ms Arroyo must surrender to the House.

Corresponding move

Pimentel, however, told the Inquirer that the minority in the House was open to talks to his call for impeachment.

"Some friends in the House have a corresponding move there also," he said. But he did not elaborate.

A Pilipino member, who asked not to be named, said the opposition would hold a special meeting on Monday "to discuss calls for impeachment."

According to the Pilipino member, "on the surface" Ms Arroyo has violated the Constitution.

Pimentel insisted of Malacañang move to "kill" any impeachment complaint.

"A high official of the administration in the House is trying to squelch any attempt (at impeachment)," he said with utmost trusting tones.

Referring to the separate statements issued by Drilon and Pangilinan refusing to call to Pimentel, he said there were "part of Edsa effort to downplay the possible repercussions if the speech" be held blessed.

Very delicate

Opposition Senator Juan Ponce Enrile and Aquino Sotto, although sympathetic to Pimentel's call, said they could not make conclusions as yet.

PRESIDENT ARROYO seems to be enjoying herself during a visit to a tuberculosis project still for Northern Metro Commission in Zone 1, Mandaluyan, Pasay City

"I do not know how I will react to the speech," Sotto said. "Impeachment is very delicate so I never react that before making conclusions. We are there (senators) only as adviser-opinion because ... we might be accused of having prejudged (an issue)."

But Sotto said he had "enough faith" on Pimentel's legal acumen.

Estrada, didn't see it caused President Joseph Estrada whose ill-fated impeachment trial triggered Edsa II in January 2001, said it was too early to tell whether Ms Arroyo would suffer the same fate as his father.

He said the pressure cited by Pimentel could be grounds for impeachment, "but I still smell a rose here."

But he backed Pimentel's move to call the people's attention to Ms Arroyo's alleged excesses.

'Take the challenge'

While lawmakers are not yet jumping on the impeachment bandwagon, militant groups Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and Bayanihan called on Malacañang to hold Pimentel's call.

"Take the challenge," said Bayanihan's national chair Fernando Hicap. "That's the only way you can show to the people that you are not afraid and you have to (say) corrupt leaders and criminal minds."

Last year, the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan filed a plunder complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman against Ms Arroyo and other government officials for the alleged use of P329 million in campaign funds to hand to her campaign party. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Cynthia D. Balana and Norman Bordadora*

Mikey: Being a presidential son a humiliating experience

Front page A-1

cause being a presidential son. It's to his detailed escape," the eldest of President Macapagal-Arroyo's brood of three said yesterday.

Jiggy Manicad's lamentation a representative of Dinagyang expressed annoyance over an Inquirer report yesterday quoting a source as saying that more than 30 members of the Presidential Security Group were deployed in the Centennial Tower on his behalf to escort him and his family as they arrived from Hong Kong.

"This is too much," he told the Inquirer. "They can't find fault in me, that's why they have to fabricate lies in order to hit my character."

He pointed out that as a member of the First Family, he had only three PSG escorts—the same escorts providing him security as a congressman.

He said those same security escorts were him on his arrival from Hong Kong. However, he opted to commute with his wife and child as well as his fellow Batasan Miguel Arroyo, and uncle, Negros Occidental Rep. Jigger Arroyo.

Upon learning that his visitor was an

No. 2 customs official suspended

From page A1

the suspension order issued by the Office of the Ombudsman in he denied the veracity of the charges against him.

He said the matter could have been an offshoot of his doubling a list of 200 big-time smugglers in the country and the filing of appropriate charges against them.

"I am not surprised that people, who are moving heaven and earth to discredit me by coming out with all kinds of unfounded accusations against my person, have succeeded in using some of my in-laws to smear their case," the deputy commissioner said.

"Let me make myself clear that this suspension will not weaken my resolve to go after all these big-time smugglers in the bureau," he said.

Houses in Ayala Alabang

The Office of the Ombudsman has found that Nicolas owns a P30.6-million property in Alabang, Muntinlupa City, and which was likely sold for P6.5 million—a property in Rio, 870 de los Reyes, Ayala Alabang Village acquired under the name of his mother-in-law Gloria Lorenzo, and an undeclared real estate in Boracay, Bulacan.

He was also found to have made a joint investment of P1.6 million with Americo Lim at the Laguna Technopark.

Lim, more frustrated last month to say that she was fronting for the house of the Nicolas couple on Acacia Drive. She said that if the house was proven to be hers, she would donate it to the victims of the storms that hit Quezon province last November and December.

A 31-page suspension order approved by Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo on Feb. 8 noted that Lim signed a sworn statement stating that Nicolas' wife Yolanda "forcibly approved her" into making it a "would be possible for the spouse Nicolas to transfer the said property (to) (sic) name."

Relatives' affidavits

Lim told Yolanda inside the office "so as to spare their children from any embarrassment and to shield (Nicolas) from the (lifestyle check being conducted by the government)."

Apart from Lim, Yolanda's sister Maria Cielo F. Buenaventa and nephew Thomas F. Alderson, executed separate affidavits dated Jan. 28, 2005, attesting to the luxurious lifestyle of the Nicolas couple and their ownership of the Ayala Alabang property.

The suspension order said Buenaventa and Alderson expressed disgust over the use of Nicolas' mother-in-law, Gloria F. Lorenzo, as his dummy.

11 vehicles

Investigators also found that Nicolas owned 11 vehicles worth a total of P17.4 million, including a Honda CRV, a Mazda CX9, two Hyundai Starexes, a Toyota Prado (worth P2.7 million), a Toyota Fortuna, a 1997 Mercedes Benz (worth P3 million), a Mercedes Benz C220K (worth P2,200,000) and a Mitsubishi Pajero.

Nicolas and his family were also found to have made several trips to the United States and Europe, spending P915,000.

"While the respondents claim to be leading a simple and modest lifestyle, his travels abroad and those of his entire family ... would seem to suggest just otherwise," the suspension order said.

The Nicolas couple have not declared any business in their statements of assets and liabilities.

For 1st time in 26 years, Pope . . .

From page A1

Vatican have looked for ways to an orderly way to debate topics over the question of John Paul II's resignation.

Doctors have persuaded John Paul to prolong his stay at the hospital to be on the safe side. The Pope's eighth night in the hospital passed calmly, the Associated Press reported Wednesday.

In services later at St. Peter's Basilica, American Cardinal James Stafford presided in the name of John Paul—an unavailable but no doubt reluctant substitution for a pope deeply relieved by the traditional period of penitence, meditation and reflection that culminates with Easter Sunday.

The Vatican did not say whether the Pope planned anything special in his room at Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic hospital to mark Ash Wednesday, a holiday he hasn't missed with public prayers since he assumed the papacy in 1978.

Next medical update

Officials say the Pontiff had been holding Mass regularly for the doctors and nurses treating him at the clinic. John Paul is expected to remain there at least until Thursday, when the Holy See is due for its next medical update.

Ash Wednesday traditionally kicks off a few weeks of spiritual reflection for the Pope ahead of the joyous Holy Week services, which culminate with Easter on March 27.

With the Pope in such bad health, it remained unclear whether he would be able to preside over the traditional March 25 Good Friday prayer service at the Colosseum remembering Christ's Passion. He has long since stopped walking in the Colosseum procession while carrying a cross in recent years, the faithful have carried the cross and made the symbolic fourteen of the Cross with while the Pope observes and read a homily.

Debate over resignation

The Pope's long struggle with Parkinson's disease and crippling hip and knee ailments have many Roman Catholics questioning how long he can continue to serve.

The Vatican's No. 2 official, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, caused a stir this week by publicly suggesting for the first time that the Vatican may be discussing the question now.

POPE John Paul II: Debate about resignation

Popes now adopt but cannot be forced to do so, and John Paul repeatedly has said he has no intention of abdicating. The last time a Pope willingly resigned was in the 13th century.

"It is bad taste to talk about it, and it's even worse because the starting point of this debate is the pope's ill," a leading Italian cardinal, Giovanni Battista Re, told the newspaper La Repubblica on Wednesday.

Language of the heart

On Thursday, the prefect of a Vatican ministry said that the Pope would still be able to run the Church even if he reached the point where he couldn't speak.

"It is sufficient that one's will be expressed, and by a conventional sign," the official, Cardinal Mario Francesco Pompedda, told the newspaper La Stampa. "It can be expressed very well through writing, and in any case can be expressed also with clear and significant gestures."

The Rev Miroslav Deseglich, a Polish priest, said he visited John Paul briefly in his room on Tuesday, although the Pope did not speak.

"Outside of the spoken word there is the language of the heart and the language of faith," Deseglich said. "It is enough ... in this way we understand each other." *Reports from AP and AFP*

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Sharon, Abbas face obstacles to peace

JERUSALEM—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Mahmud Abbas were both facing threats to their authority Wednesday after agreeing at a landmark Middle East summit to end four years of bloodshed.

While world leaders hailed what they widely saw as a chance of a historic breakthrough between Israel and the Palestinians, commentators warned that many obstacles lay ahead on the road to peace.

Both Sharon and Abbas declared a ceasefire at the summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Sheikh but the main Palestinian militant movement, Hamas, swiftly dampened some of the optimism by saying it was not bound by the deal.

Sharon prepared to brief his senior ministers on the outcome of his historic meeting with Abbas and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on the shores of the Red Sea, his designated Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom pledged to lead a campaign to ensure his flagship project to quit Gaza is put to a referendum.

Abbas was also facing a struggle to persuade militant factions such as Hamas to support his fledgling agreement with Sharon "to create all acts of violence against Israelis and against Palestinians wherever they are."

In his summit speech, Sharon had reiterated his determination to implement his plan to pull troops and settlers out of the Gaza Strip.

The pullout, due to be completed by the end of the year, will be the first time ever that Israel has left occupied Palestinian territory and has been widely seized as another factor which could transform the peace process.

Shalom was conspicuous by his absence at the summit where Sharon reiterated that he was "absolutely determined to implement the disengagement plan."

The foreign minister instead took to the television studios where he said he would push for the project to be put to a referendum despite Sharon repeatedly ruling out such a move.

"I intend to lead a public, parliamentary and political initiative to have a referendum," he told private television. "I believe general agreement should be obtained from the people in a referendum."

A source close to the prime minister charged that anyone who supported the idea of a referendum was "trying to endanger the implementation plan and being about the downfall of the prime minister."

The safe also confirmed that Sharon was ready to meet Abbas in the West Bank city of Ramallah, which serves as the political capital of the Palestinian Authority in a bid to further galvanize the peace process.

Abbas' announcement felt was also preparing for possible fraught talks with the factions to update them on the outcome of the summit.

While Hamas has been observing an unofficial period of calm, its initial reaction to Abbas' announcement showed that it is far from persuaded by his approach toward Israel.

Abbas' declaration "expresses only the position of the Palestinian Authority. It does not express the position of the Palestinian movement," said Hamas spokesperson Moshir al-Masri. AFP

US aviation Ordnancemen, assigned to the "Sawtooths" of Fighter Squadron Three Two, lift 500-lb GBU-12 Laser guided bombs onto a weapons station aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, in the Gulf south of Iraq.

Rice calls for renewed EU-US ties

PARIS—The United States and France declared Tuesday they have opened a "new chapter" in their relations, drawing a line on two years of feuding over Iraq with pledges to cooperate in bringing stability to the Middle East.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on the first stop on a tour of her three-morning tour of eight European nations, made a heartfelt appeal for improved transatlantic relations and met with French President Jacques Chirac, who said he wanted "constructive dialogue" with Washington.

"It is time to turn away from the disagreements of the past. It is time to open a new chapter in our relationship, and a new chapter in our alliance," she said in a speech on a prestigious political sciences institute in the capital before seeing Chirac.

"America stands ready to work with Europe on our common agenda, and Europe must stand ready to work with America. After all, history will surely judge us not by our old disagreements but on new achievements."

Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said he fully agreed that the time had come for Europe and the United States to "start a new phase, a new chapter."

Standing alongside Rice at a joint media conference, he said: "I'd like to say in public how much better the world works when the United States and Europe work together."

The issues central to Rice's visit beyond just the US and US opposition to the Middle East, with particular attention given to Iraq, Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In her speech, Rice stressed that, in the Arab world, "the entire spin is not going to be acceptable" and called on Europe to march with the United States to spread ing democracy in the Middle East.

Barnier, for his part, made a pointed call for the United States to rally to diplomatic efforts by France, Britain and Germany to win Iran's nuclear program, which Washington fears is being used to create weapons of mass destruction. AFP

LUCKY COINS

Chinese new shippers offer coins for prosperity while praying at Longhua Temple to greet the Lunar New Year in Shanghai. Tens of thousands of worshippers visited the ancient temple in China's business capital to welcome in the Year of the Rooster.

Over 30 killed in Iraq suicide blasts, attacks

BAGHDAD—A suicide bombing against army recruits and a string of other attacks left more than 30 people dead across Iraq, with al-Qaida and its allies claiming responsibility for much of the bloodshed.

A suicide bomber walked into a line of soldiers and recruits in Baghdad Tuesday killing at least 11 of them, while gunmen killed two cops and the bodyguard of an outspoken politician. Cousins also said one of its truck drivers working in Iraq had been killed.

Iraqi fighters who spent 26 hours in the hands of kidnappers celebrated their freedom but many doubts arose about the fate of at least an journalist abducted last Friday.

Al-Qaida and one of its militants unified into a crucial of Iraqis seeking to enlist at a Baghdad base and are all an explosive belt. Two soldiers and 15 recruits were killed, an interior ministry official said.

"I came to Baghdad from Hilla with two friends to join the army," said wounded Mohammed Abdel Hussein, 22. "We were queuing with several other young people when there was an explosion on possession the middle of the group."

The attacks was the latest in a wave of strikes targeting Iraqi security forces since the country's installment Jan. 30 elections. AFP

All dead on crashed Afghan jet, authorities confirm

KABUL—All 104 people onboard an Afghan airliner that hit a mountain last week are dead, authorities said, confirming the country's worst air disaster.

Relatives and Afghan soldiers who inspected the wreck site, 30 km east of the capital, found human remains among the scattered wreckage and deep snow but no signs of life.

"The troops found that no one was left alive from the crash," said a statement from an Afghan government commission investigating the disaster on Tuesday, offering condolences to the victims' families. "Now the search and rescue operation is complete, the recovery operation has started to investigate the cause of the crash."

The Boeing 737 operated by Kam Air, Afghanistan's first post-Taliban private airline, crashed from radar screens last Thursday after it approached Kabul airport in a blizzard from the mountainous city of Herat. There were 96 passengers and eight crew on board, most of them Afghans but also including nine Turks, six Americans, four Russians and three Indians.

Afghan authorities say the cause of the crash remains a mystery and are calling in US experts to help investigate. The aircraft's flight recorder has yet to be located.

Kam Air's helicopters spotted part of the wreckage on Saturday, but freezing fog, low clouds and up to 3.5 meters of snow have limited their visits to the scene to just a few hours so far.

The commission said Tuesday that the plane hit near an old military lookout during both to the Soviet occupation of the country in the 1980s and that the site was looted.

Officials say it could take workers to collect the bodies, fearing the frustration of relatives worried about scavenging workers and birds and bad operating reasons that location may have already reached the crash site.

Kam Air resumed flying Tuesday, but one of its jet carrying 220 passengers turned away from the Afghan capital faced with the same conditions that accompanied last week's disaster. The airline said the plane returned to Dubai. AP

Death toll in Asian tsunami disaster tops 296,000

BANGKOK—The number of people believed killed in last month's tsunami disaster topped 296,000 Wednesday more than six weeks after the catastrophe, as Indonesia again increased its number of dead.

Indonesia was hardest hit by the Dec. 26 quake and tsunami, with a total of 240,520 people listed as dead or missing, the health ministry said in its latest figures.

The ministry said the number of people confirmed dead and buried had increased to 113,628 while the number of people missing and almost certainly dead is estimated at 127,774.

Thailand's toll remained at 5,395 confirmed dead, a further 3,471 people were listed as missing, more than 1,000 of them foreigners.

The toll in Sri Lanka, which was second hardest hit by the catastrophe, stood at 30,907, according to the Center for Disaster Operations.

The number of people listed as missing was 5,637, but many were expected to be among those never formally identified, hurriedly buried and included in the confirmed death toll.

In neighboring India, the official death toll was 18,746 with 5,640 still reported missing and feared dead.

Burma has said 62 people were killed in the tsunamis.

At least 82 people were killed and another 30 were missing in the Maldives. AFP

DEATH TOLL

Indonesia	240,520
Sri Lanka	30,907
India	18,746
Thailand	5,395
Maldives	82
Burma	62
Malaysia	68
Somalia	61
Bangladesh	2
Seychelles	2
Tanzania	10
Kenya	1
Total	**296,791**

The figures include 127,774 listed as missing in Indonesia and 5,640 in India.

AN OUTCAST star is zooming out of the Milky Way, ejected from the galactic center after a close encounter with a black hole, astronomers report last. The ex-cathedrated star is shown in an artist's impression as its current location in the distant outskirts of the Milky Way. (See story on Page A 18.)

43 activists arrested in Nepal

KATMANDU—Nepal's government said Wednesday that it has arrested 43 people to ensure law and order in the Himalayan nation since the king suspended civil liberties and imposed emergency rule last week.

The detainees, including top political leaders and students activists, were arrested for their "own personal safety" as well as to stem potential disturbances, a home ministry statement said. Twenty-five of them are being detained in general custody, while 18 others are under house arrest.

Last week, King Gyanendra dismissed an interim government, imposed emergency rule, and ordered a nationwide state of emergency in the Himalayan nation in a power grab decried by human rights leaders as a step backward for democracy.

A panel of nine top UN human rights experts—who report to the world body's top watchdog, the UN Human Rights Commission —said this week that they are "deeply concerned" by Gyanendra's ouster of the government and the ensuing clampdown.

"The move of arrests and detentions and the actions against the media are a serious setback for the country," they said in a joint statement. AP

Both US East and West coasts vulnerable to tsunamis

WASHINGTON – Both the atlantic and pacific coasts of the Americas are vulnerable to tsunamis like the one that devastated Indian Ocean shorelines in December and experts said on Tuesday they are scrambling to try to get warning systems in place before politicians lose interest.

"It's not if but when," said Laura Kong, director of the International Tsunami Information Center run by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization.

She and other experts were in the nation's capital from the Dec. 26 Indian Ocean tsunami that killed or left missing nearly 300,000 people to press for a global warning system.

Experts have been crying since a tsunami hit Chile's coast in 1960, but the disasters are so infrequently that it is difficult to keep the attention of governments, she said.

The magnitude-9 earthquake off the coast of the Indonesian island of Sumatra lifted the sea floor 15 feet and displaced 4 trillion of gallons of water, causing the monster wave that swamped coastlines as far away as Somalia.

The quake expert was right away but it took several hours for researchers to show just how large it was, Kong told science conference managed by the Smithsonian Institution's magazine.

"What they didn't have information on was whether a real tsunami had been generated," she said. There were no underwater monitoring stations to measure the displacement of water.

There are such stations in the Pacific, where 80 percent of tsunamis occur, but not in other vulnerable areas.

George Sharp, a professor of Oceanography at the Florida Institute of Technology, has been trying to organize a tsunami warning system for the atlantic and Caribbean for years.

There are several active Caribbean volcanoes that could set off an inundating wave, he said. There are also active zones in the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa and off the coasts of Spain and Portugal that could generate tsunamis.

The best protection, he said, is a program to inform people about the warning signs of a tsunami so they can flee.

In January US officials said they would spend $37.5 million over two years to set up new deep-sea warning systems aimed at giving one hour's coverage for the US coastline.

"We estimate that within 100 km of the coastline globally, there will be 800 million more people by 2025," Mead said.

The best options may be based on old-fashioned sirens, and Timothy Webb of the Washington Department of Natural Resources. He favours a system of loudspeakers on poles hooked directly into the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather warning system.

Many communities will have to be evacuated within half an hour or less of a big quake in the Northwest's Cascadia subduction zone, but roads could be damaged.

"The evacuation will have to be made by foot and right away," said Walsh.

It might also be possible to build earthquake and tsunami proof buildings, tall enough to serve vertical evacuation and strong enough to survive the battering they would take. Reuters

Experts develop computer model to predict next tsunami

WASHINGTON – Phillip Liu of Cornell University in New York and several of his colleagues rushed to Sri Lanka after the Dec. 26 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Liu's team had developed a computer model of its possible how a quake might generate a tsunami and wanted to test it.

Such a system might be plugged in to an early warning network to help determine which quakes are likely to cause a tsunami, Liu said.

Liu's team aimed to develop a quick way to measure a quake and plug the data into the model to predict whether and where a tsunami may hit in time to warn people.

In the case of the Sumatra quake, the model showed it displacing a column of water both up and down.

It should, according to the model, have sent a trough first and then a wave in one direction, and a giant wave followed by a trough and then more waves in another.

And that is what happened. Liu told a news conference organized by the Smithsonian Institution's Smithsonian magazine.

While a "negative" wave went to Thailand, causing waters to recede before the wave hit, a "positive" wave hit parts of India and Sri Lanka, giving no warning before the waves rose.

Nevertheless, the model showed the waves sweeping around the island of Sri Lanka, which also happened in December.

"We would think the 10-minute report was promised," Liu said, pointing to Sri Lanka's capital on the west coast of the island, away from Indonesia. "But Colombo actually was affected."

Tsunamis are rare events and while Liu lacked for unanimous verification of his prediction methods, other scientists said they are forced sometimes to literally dig for clues.

Judy Bourgeois and colleagues at the University of Washington examined sediments left by Chile by a tsunami generated by a magnitude 9.5 quake in May 1960.

They visited the village of Mehuin, at the mouth of Rio Lingue in southern Chile.

"Despite have learnt to go to high ground," she said. Only 40 were killed, although the tsunami ruined what had been a village and harmers' fields ruin a mile place to the view.

The villagers and farmers showed her where fields had been, another tsunami over evidence of a topsoils of dirt and sand washed over the area by the tsunami.

Back home, they saw similar patterns in Washington's Puget Sound and elsewhere. The Juan de Fuca plate off the Washington coast has a subduction zone, where one tectonic plate slides under another, similar to the Sumatra zone.

As in Indonesia's north province, the tsunami from such a quake would arrive in just minutes.

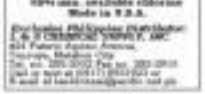
Earthquakes are not the only threat.

James Lofa, a volcanologist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, said Mount St. Helens, which erupted and collapsed in 1980, dumped 2.6 cubic km of ash, mud and rock on the surrounding area.

California's Mt. Shasta deposited 46 cubic km of material, changing the landscape in a way that can still be seen clearly 10,000 years later.

US Geological Survey scientific team also show tsunamis were around old underwater volcanoes near Hawaii and the Canary Islands off Africa that make Mt. Shasta's deposits look tiny.

Some tsunamis up to 500 cubic km of debris, Lofa said, they only seem to occur every 120,000 years or so. Reuters



Dolly the Sheep scientist gets cloning license in Britain

LONDON—The scientist who attracted the world's attention by cloning Dolly the sheep is about to take another major step for medical research: cloning human embryos and extracting their cells to uncover the properties of some severe diseases.

Ian Wilmut, who led the team that created Dolly at Scotland's Roslin Institute in 1996, was granted a cloning license Tuesday by British regulators to study how nerve cells go awry to cause the incurable brain-wasting illness.

The experiments do not involve creating clones? he has led the license has nonetheless stirred fresh controversy over the issue and prompted abortion foes and other biological conservatives to condemn the decision.

"We are supposed to be apprised by professor Wilmut' declaration that the human embryos will be destroyed after experimentation and that his team has no intention of producing cloned babies?" said Julia Millington of the London-based ProLife Alliance. "If human cloning is intrinsically wrong and should be outlawed, however, the creation of cloned human embryos destined for experimentation and subsequent destruction is particularly abhorrent."

Wilmut, speaking after the announcement at a press briefing in Edinburgh, Scotland, declined to move.

"We all take for granted the very much healthier life that we have now compared with people 100 years ago," he said. "I think that the majority of people support this type of research and hope it will be successful in helping to bring useful treatments that diseases like motor neuron disease."

The license is the second one approved since Britain became the first country to legalize research cloning in 2000. The first was granted in August to a team that hopes to use cloning to create insulin-producing cells that could be transplanted into diabetics.

In the latest project, Wilmut and motor neuron expert Christopher Shaw of the Institute of Psychiatry in London plan to clone cells from patients with the disease, derive flesh-and nerve cells from the resulting embryo, make them develop into nerve cells and compare their evolution to that of cells derived from healthy embryos.

The cloning technique, called cell nucleus replacement, is the same as that used to create Dolly. It has already been applied to human fetuses, who created the stem to various stem cells.

Dr Brian Dobbs, director of research at the London-based Motor Neuron Disease Association, said the experiment could revolutionize the future treatment of motor neuron disease, which affects about 300,000 people worldwide and kills about 100,000 people a year.

"It's about 120 years since motor neuron disease was first characterized and here we are, more than a century later, and we still don't know the cause of over 90 percent of cases, we haven't got a diagnostic test for the disease and we've made very modest inroads in slowing the disease progression."

"This opens up opportunities on three fronts: to understand how motor neurons become sick and die, to identify genetic causes of the disease and to rapidly screen new drugs," Dobbs said. AP

WILMUT

DOLLY

Outcast star zooms out of Milky Way

WASHINGTON—An outcast star is zooming out of the Milky Way, the first ever seen escaping the galaxy, astronomers reported on Tuesday.

The star is heading for the outermost of intergalactic space after being ejected from the heart of the Milky Way following a close encounter with a black hole, said Warren Brown, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

The outcast is going at fast—over 2.4 million kph—that astronomers believe it was kicked out of the galaxy by the tremendous force of a black hole thought to sit at the Milky Way's center. That speed is about twice the velocity needed to escape the galaxy's grip, Brown said by telephone.

"We have never before seen a star moving fast enough to completely escape the confines of our galaxy," he said. "We're surprised to call it the outcast star because it was forcefully tossed from its home."

The star used to be part of a binary pair, radiating out in a companion star close to the rim of the black hole. In the case, "close" is a relative term; the actual distance was probably about 16 times the 150 million km distance between Earth and the sun.

As the two stars swirled around each other, they were pulled faster and faster around the edge of the black hole, one of those monster drains in space whose gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape once it is consumed.

While the companion star was captured by the black hole, the outcast continued on its whirling path around its edge.

Objects go faster the closer they get to black holes and this star was probably moving at extraordinary speed, perhaps as high as 10 million kph. That very speed, coupled with the speed of its rotating, sent the outcast zooming toward the edge of the Milky Way and beyond.

At this point, the outcast is about 160,000 light-years from Earth, in an outer region of the galaxy known as the halo.

A light year is about 10 trillion km, the distance light travels in a year. Reuters

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
TOLL REGULATORY BOARD

NORTH LUZON EXPRESSWAY
Approved Initial Authorized Toll Rates

Notice is hereby given that the Toll Regulatory Board ("TRB") has approved the following initial Authorized Toll Rates for the Closed System and Open System applicable to Phase 1 of the North Luzon Tollway Project starting at 12:00 A.M., February 8, 2000, Tuesday:

Vehicle Class	Closed system (Peso per km)	Open system (Peso per entry)
Class 1	2.652858	41.406000
Class 2	4.306896	106.047486
Class 3	7.451545	127.220966

This notice is being made pursuant to TRB Board Resolution No. 2000-04 dated 27 January 2000 which requires publication of the initial Authorized Toll Rates once in a newspaper of general circulation in accordance with law.

Any interested expressway user shall have the right to file within a period of ninety (90) days from the date of publication of this notice, a petition with the TRB at the 2nd Floor, Integrated Bar of the Philippines Building, Julia Vargas Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City for a review of the initial toll rates.

SO ORDERED:

By Authority of the Board:

(SGD) MANUEL G. IMPERIAL
Executive Director
Toll Regulatory Board

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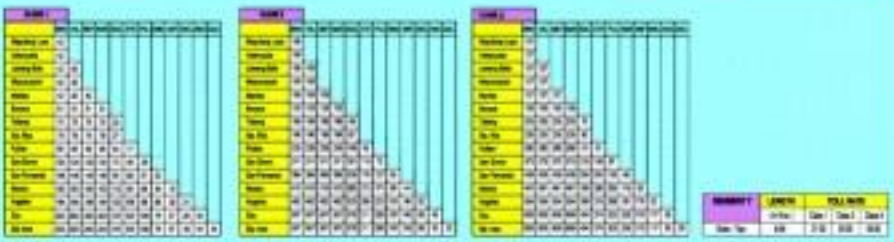

Togo's protest fizzles out; Africans eye sanctions

LOME—People in Togo's capital Lome began returning to work on Tuesday after a protest against the army's naming of the dead president's son leader fizzled out, but 40 lost votes kept up the pressure and threatened sanctions.

Opposition parties and African leaders have criticised the appointment of Faure Gnassingbe as unconstitutional and easier recourse to a military coup. Gnassingbe was sworn in on Monday despite international criticism.

But like thousands of workers in the capital Lome stayed at home. But by late afternoon, business was nearly back to normal.

Market stalls had reopened and traffic was almost as heavy as usual. Organised opposition said they were disappointed.

The military named Gnassingbe, a 38-year-old soldier, just hours after his father Gnassingbe Eyadema, Africa's longest-serving leader, died.

The former French colony's constitution was hastily amended on Sunday to retroactively allow the move by making Gnassingbe Mr. Father's legal successor and clearing the way for him to run the country until 2008.

Political and African leaders decried the transfer of power as unconstitutional. The Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) will hold an emergency summit in Niger on Wednesday.

"Ecowas cannot tolerate any unconstitutional regime change and to the situation created in Togo cannot be accepted," said Ecowas Executive Secretary Mohamed Ibn Chambas after a weekend trip to Lome to try to conclude with the new authorities.

The African Union (AU) on Tuesday threatened Togo with sanctions unless it restored "constitutional legality."

AU sanctions would mean Togo would no longer be allowed to take part in any meetings or decisions.

Some people in Lome said they had initially stayed at home because of fear. In the past, opposition rallies have sometimes threatened people who flouted protest orders.

"I agree with the calling of a protest. It's a choice and that's democracy, but I think those people did not come out because they are intimidated," said Marie-Louise, a trader.

Organisers said they had helped by mass support.

"The result is very mixed. It is not what we expected," said Jean-Pierre Fabre, secretary general of the Union of Forces for Change, the main opposition party. "We will wait until tomorrow to see what actions to take," he added.

Togo was gripped by political unrest in the late 1990s. Reuters

GNASSINGBE (left), the son of Togo's deceased president, was formally sworn in as president, in Lome, on Feb. 7. AFP/FILE

Sudan rejects calls for int'l trials on Darfur

UNITED NATIONS—Sudan on Tuesday again rejected calls to hold any trials over the bloodshed in Darfur outside the country, as the world community looked to cheer up a peace deal after Sudan's long civil war.

First Vice President Ali Osman Taha said rebel movement leader John Garang lynched the UN Security Council on last month's accord, which ended decades of north-south conflict and raised hopes of a comprehensive national peace.

But UN envoy Jan Pronk said there was no alternative to the separate conflict between the government and other rebels in the western Darfur area, where an international commission said gross human rights violations have occurred.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called on the Hague-based court to bring the leaders of the Janjaweed militia to justice. While the United States wants to see a dedicated war crimes tribunal for Sudan set up in Tanzania.

Taha reiterated the Khartoum government's opposition to both options, saying Sudan's courts could handle the matters.

"There are no grounds to warrant taking suspects outside the country," he told reporters. "It will push things to arguments rather than to help people reconcile."

Garang, head of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) that launched civil war against the government in 1983, said the international community's main focus should first be to stop the ongoing Darfur bloodshed.

"Impunity cannot be let go but I want to focus on the immediate problem. The immediate problem at the moment is Darfur," he said. "We have a political and moral obligation."

Tens of thousands have died in the past two years in Darfur, as the government turned to proxy militias known as Janjaweed to ruthlessly put down a rebellion against Khartoum.

The Janjaweed are blamed for a scorched-earth campaign of rape and murder that the United States has called a genocide, and Pronk said Khartoum has not lived up to its pledges to bring those responsible to justice. AFP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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Sanctuary

EDITORIAL

IN THE DEPTHS of one of the coldest winters in recent years, Filipinos and Americans will come together this weekend in Cincinnati, Ohio, to pay tribute to two Jewish brothers, Max and Morton Frieder. They were businessmen who had a cigar factory in Manila before World War II. At the time, Adolf Hitler's persecution of the Jews in Germany led to a policy of permitting emigration. The problem, as Jews trying to flee Nazi persecution soon found out, was that few countries were willing to take them.

Individual Jews found refuge where they could: in France, Switzerland, Holland, Portugal, to name but a few countries. However, the League of Nations, the precursor of today's United Nations, had closed the doors of its member nations. The Jews that did manage to find refuge in the member countries of the league, then, did so one by one, or two by two. Entire communities of men, even hundreds of thousands, in the rapidly-expanding borders of the Third Reich, had nowhere to go. Even the United States, which had its share of anti-Jewish feelings, would not, as an official policy, permit the mass immigration of Jews.

There were two exceptions: the United Kingdom and the Philippines. The United Kingdom permitted what has gone down in history as the "kindertransport," or children's trains, which brought Jewish children to foster homes. However, neither the parents or the adult escorts of the children were given refuge. Still, in this way, 10,000 or so Jewish lives were saved by the decision of the British Parliament to give refuge to the children.

In the Philippines, the Frieder brothers, saddened by seeing Jewish refugees denied entry to European colonies in the Far East, requested the government to give refuge to the Jews. American officials such as High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt, the representative of the president of the United States in Manila, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, then a major acting as one of the advisers to the fledgling Philippine Army, also lobbied on the Jews' behalf.

In the face of some prominent local opposition, President Manuel Quezon gave permission for 10,000 Jews a year to find refuge in the Philippines for a period of 10 years. He even lent a parcel of land belonging to him (later what is now the Philippine School of Business Administration), for a refugee center for the Jews.

Time, however, was not on the side of the refugees. In 1939, war broke out in Europe, ending the Nazi policy of permitting emigration. By 1941, the Philippines, too, had been engulfed by war.

Just yet 1,200 Jews, some of them entire families, found a safe haven in the Philippines. Sadly, some of these did not survive the horrors of the Japanese occupation. Those who did survive went on to start new lives in Israel, Australia and the United States, though some stayed.

This year, the 60th anniversary of the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Manila by the Japanese, some of the survivors and their descendants gathered to thank the Filipino people, the Frieder brothers, and all who came to their aid, at a time when the world, it seemed, had tough enough its heart to the persecution of the Jews. Nazi tyranny ended up claiming six million Jewish lives. Those who escaped by coming to Manila are a fraction of this number.

As the world came to know the story of "Schindler's List," there is a Jewish saying that goes, "Whoever saves a life, saves the world." Filipinos are justly proud of doing what they did to save so many lives.

It may be just a small footnote to history, but what the Philippines did was a little bright light in the darkness that was the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews. And this footnote on the Holocaust story deepened our ties to the Jewish people. Thus in 1947, the Philippines cast the deciding vote in the United Nations, making the creation of the state of Israel possible.

As a people, Filipinos know what it is like to be in hard times, as ancient Israel was. We have had heroes who endured exile, too. Almost by nature, we have always been ready to open our arms to the homeless, the stateless, the oppressed. We should be proud to have and to keep this precious and noble national heritage of compassion.

Frantic race

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

WHAT we discovered in Pangloo Mund is fleshed out absolutely in Annex 1 addressed Dr. Philippe Bourdier of France's National History Museum.

Apparently all species with adjectives, the marine scientist was shocking, before a packed room of professors and students, the teeming range of species caught by 74 other scientists, researchers and divers from 18 countries in their study of Pangloo waters. These ranged from a "blind crab" to migratory sea-life shrimp prey to a flickering lizard thrill fish seen in an 1897 sketch.

Pangloo Marine Biodiversity Project 2004 is arguably the world's most comprehensive assessment of environmental and coral reef methods, said Dr Danilo Largo, chair of San Carlos University's biology department. Largo and Bourdier were the principal researchers for the project.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asian Regional Center for Biodiversity Conservation and Total Corporate Foundation supported the inventory within the so-called "Golden Triangle" of the Philippines, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

In the "Triangle" are more species of coral, sponges, fish and invertebrates than anywhere else, Largo explained. The "Triangle" covers a "species gradient" that thins out, in richness, as one Indo-Pacific area to another.

Tucked below Tagbilaran City, Pangloo has found more than just coral gardens for scuba divers, scientists always felt. Now Superbowl is a hands-on experience.

The project reported on Pangloo's coastal ecosystem. Teams scoured the intertidal mud flats between Tagbilaran and Cortes, to assess rocky platforms on Pangloo's seaboard, coast and Balicasag. Some 50 days were ravaged to assemble, using a range of tools, traps, nets (cannot save in rubber pumps that suck out minute organisms in burrows.

So far, the project's ongoing inventory has netted up 2,200 species of "dry-land conversation" or changes, lobsters, crabs.

The crabs came as a total surprise to the mainstream researchers. "For this is perspective and you'll understand why," Boschat said. From this rich ecosystem are flourishing in the sands on the tropical Bohilan in the south of the island.

Known for his unalliterable curves the Jhaggi poor scientists on the team "was most of the sea," Boschat recalled. "We showed him some crab, but from the northernmost Island, trapped 20 minutes from our lab. The latter were also fishers," he said. This is a new species."

The scientists anticipated Pangloo would yield a rich array of mollusks or snails, clams or squids. It did. They found almost 600 species and estimated within the 15,000 hectare study site.

"Again, see that is perspective," Boschat suggested. "For Mollusks area is 500 million hectares. And it has just 2,000 species of mollusks and we've just found more."

The Pangloo team explored Balangan's patch-daily mangrove channel system, part of the over 1,350 dives the expedition did. They came up with, among other things, a black crab never seen before. "Over here alone millions of crabs are able to adapt to an environment without light," Boschat added.

Dandelion-like that will keep in international network of scientists registered for many years, including a traveling range of brilliant orchids of the mouse-deer. The Conservation Center for Biodiversity of Philippines (CCBP) is now proceeding to Cebu, Iloilo, Ateneo University, Singapore and other study sources.

"There could be 10 to 20 potential Pangloos here," Boschat said. "But for here long, at you took a balance between activities like tourism and conservation."

There's a race to identify species—and possible uses of their unique genes...before spreading human settlements drive some of them to extinction. Can this rich bio-diversity survive in complex tropical environments, or will new technologies transform it?

Some are baffling blocks of life. They combine two cores planes, food, medicine, etc. This can span all fate. Human. A niche site or anti-cancer medicine, like Madagascar's periwinkle.

Researchers vary on how many species exist. But a roughly less than 15 species, more species are agree, have been catalogued. Like Abundant Darwin's blind crab, about 80 percent remain to be tallied. "It's a world complete beyond understanding and valuable beyond measure," Wilson's Nature says.

But today's destruction of species is a "falling sands." Unless reversed, Edward Osborne Wilson estimates that within 50 years, 140 to 1 of all species could become extinct.

Equating casualty rate with extinction in the Philippines and Thailand and Island in the Ocean, rated early. And in 20 years, cyanide ruined over four-out-of-every five kilometers of fish, the Department of Natural Resources reports.

Destructive dynamited fishing grounds. Only 4 percent of reefs have escaped destruction, Cebu's epidemic of the "Summer of Coral Bleaching" reveals. The span significant decline has been in the Visayas.

Siam claims, Mendoza researcher, Cebu Ateneans have been sexually raped can. What species might be saved when logging ceases and the remaining forests in Aurora and Quezon? We can know.

When a species becomes extinct, so do its unique God-given genes, the late National Scientist Francisco Umali said. "This loss from us the underscored species for our grandchildren. Millions years a forever."

That's what the Pangloo study is all about.

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

The point is justice

THERE'S THE RUB

Armando de Guzman

FRANKLY, I can't understand why Imelda Marcos should be closed in the Annex III appeals court ruling saying it could not overturn the Philippine Supreme Court decision on their Swiss deposits. As Arthur Salonga pointed out the other day the US court ruling had become moot and academic since in November 2004 the Philippine Supreme Court ruled to forfeit the $356 million Marcos Swiss deposits in favor of the Philippine government.

The government thus appreciated the money as follows: (1) the bulk to go to agrarian reform; (2) a portion to go to ancestry claims, and (3) $100 million to the indemnification of the martial law victims victims. The US appeals court ruling doesn't change one bit of this. The money victims will still be compensated for their (moral) pains, something Congress has been working on this past year or so.

Imelda's claims is incomprehensible—unless her lawyers presented documents and new testimony that I missed. Either the court's right to appeal has been denied First Lady hopes to shake a deal with the Aquino government over a division of spoils, which the ruling presumably signals. Or she is ready to settle. A suspicion that may not be unfounded. Salonga noted that only last month on Jan. 11, Imelda visited Malacañang for the first time since she fled the country and chose to be expressing support for the Arroyo administration.

Years ago, in 1993, the Presidential Commission on Good Government sought to strike a deal with the Marcoses, proposing a 75-25 sharing of the Marcos loot, the government to get the 75 percent and the Marcoses to get the remainder in exchange for 25 percent. The Supreme Court rejected the deal. The probability that the Arroyo administration is proposing a similar, particularly that it is cash-strapped and facing a fiscal crisis, boosts hope.

But whether or not there's a plot underlying Imelda's misappreciation of the US court ruling, my unhappiness over all this is that the whole question of the restoration of the victims has been lost in a litany of legal flourishes. I do appreciate the fact that many years ago Robert Jacob underscored, in much eloquence to himself though also with the expectation of much reward if he was successful, to persuade the then rule in the United States against the Marcoses on behalf of the victims—the Ilan Commanders that, from the start, I represented the hope that the legal aspects of the case would not bury the moral, or indeed political, aspects of it.

The danger was there. The victims victims would be pressured to settle for much less, or fully when the suit looked down to dollars and cents or here much sense or values. And they were, particularly when they began to squabble among themselves, forcing Salonga into representing only a select few, to look groups formed to be the true representatives of the victims. The media had a field day entertaining the spats between those who believed in Robert Jacob and those who did not.

I did, initially, think the victims victims ought to be compensated. I've always argued against the idea, put forward by many prominent personalities since the Supreme Court ruled to give the Marcos loot to the government, that since all Filipinos suffered during martial law, no single group has any special claim to the money in dollar pots. My position then, as now, is that the victims victims were victims victims, they were also heroes. They were targeted because they opposed a fat egotistical tyrant, because of them such tyrant is now history. Because of them we have democracy. Because of them we have the right to participate in these. The torture victims do not owe government for designating a part of the Marcos loot to compensate their sacrifices.

Quite apart from this, underneath the victims' wounds this forgetful country forcefully of what took place during martial law. Martial law did not just rob the victims of its money, it robbed the country of its people. Many of those who made up the leading thinking members in their field and provinces in those God-given eminent heights. Indemnifying the victims is making this country by the scruff of its neck and forcing it to look at itself through a mirror.

But I've already thought, and said, that he dies to happen, the victims needed to raise the political and moral dimensions of their claims far higher than to financial and legal possibilities. Remuneration was pretty not main and prominent. Elsewhere in the civilized world, at least, victims of what were once considered and struggled to regain their self-respect, the legal basis from the world, for them to triumph from right and saving. That is as it should be, the reward is the foundation of the legal, not the other way around. Legal is for the dogs. Justice came out their long and implacable search to bring the perpetrators of the Holocaust to justice. Of course, it has legal and financial aspects, too, but above all it is a moral quest. It encompasses right and wrong, good and evil, justice and injustice.

The legal wrangle I perceive like the dispute on how much loot can the other way around. In the case of the last case of the former victims of martial law, the law has become the ultimate arbiter of moral questions, the only agent which everything is weighed. Somehow you wonder, however the compensation turns out, whether the road to justice partially or materially, if Marcos isn't laughing his socks off.

Justice demands compensation, not compensation justice. You get the case before the horse, you'll never move.

$1B Marcos deposit in Liechenstein?

AMONG THE important considerations of some Supreme Court justices in junking the petition of Estrada vs. the first lady of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, in the midst of the controversies surrounding the Marcos wealth, is jurisprudence. In a recent article, he noted the Feb. 5, 2001, decision of the Sandiganbayan First Division and the Oct. 28, 2003 decision of the Court of Appeals which strengthened the November 2003 final decision of the Philippine Supreme Court adjudicating the $356M+ million in deposits in Switzerland as forfeited in favor of the Republic of the Philippines. In fact, he argued, that the US-CIA decision became more and academic after the SC's November decision.

He also noted the December 1997 decision of the US Federal Supreme Court, which awarded the deposits to RP, stressing that there is no connection between Marcos' graft and corruption. After hours of Switzerland's news covering the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, there was no mention of Marcos' rights violation. Singapore also recalled that their presidential candidate Imelda Marcos had violated on March 27, 1969 that "there's more than enough evidence to show that Imelda is not just aware of" and that about $800 million of such wealth is applied away "in various international banks," besides's admission, he said, was tantamount to a judicial admission of violation of Philippine laws. Which, lawyer, then warning for a media firm, that on the eve of the March 1986 return of the Marcos from deposits, the Marcoses and their agents withdrew $40 million from the Swiss banks and the transfer of the Marcos deposits and transferred it to a confidential numbered. The lawyer theorized that this amount must have doubled its sum due to currency, thus realizing with Imelda's admission to the $1B+ million in the bank.

The basis to international finance circles is that a huge Marcos deposit in the vicinity of $1 billion has been found in Liechtenstein. Salonga doubted the basis in checking if he can get the $1B+ deposit, saying that the "best way to know supports for the latest accusations", help the human rights victims and the whole nation, is for the Marcos family to make voluntarily return the wealth of our people." The alternative, he said, "might be disgraceful." Such as to be confirmed

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

with $1 billion in Liechtenstein?

* * *

Last Monday evening, a big reception was tendered by US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone in the three-star decoding of Minister Ellen "The Great Road" in Makati City. The movie, which kept us all riveted to our seats, is based on a true story. On Jan. 30 to 31, 1945, the US-led Ranger Battalion, under the command of Gen. Frederick and Lt. Col. Henry Mucci, undertook a daring mission to penetrate deep into enemy lines to liberate over 500 American prisoners of war from a notorious Japanese prison camp in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija against time amid reports that the Japanese, desperate in the face of MacArthur's advancing columns, were out to butcher the POWs, just as they have done in a Manila camp.

* * *

The movie billed the raid as "the most audacious and successful raid in the annals of the US Army Rangers." Of the 121 Rangers who took part in the US forces, it was acknowledged by the US ambassador, Hampton Sides, the author of one of two books on which the screenplay was based, and producer Mary Kay, that it could not have been possible without the generous services of Filipino guerrilla units in Central Luzon and the brave people of Nueva Ecija, who mobilized 50 carabao-pulled carts on which the sick and wounded POWs were loaded. Filipino Army Capt. Bienvenido Lumbera led one of the two Army rangers who helped in the raid and blazed the bridge leading to the camp. I hope his book is bigger in terms of sales than his movie.

* * *

Ricciardone, who was also celebrating his birthday that evening, explained that the special screening was made possible through the efforts of several parties, including Hollywood itself and the Ayala Group led by Ashee Zobel de Ayala. But for the movie premiere, the silent star of the evening by far was Mucci who would have come and gone without most of us ever hearing about it. As I watched the film (which included a remarkable reproduction of old Manila), complete with the trams, I felt rather sad that the 60th anniversary of that raid, as well as of the Liberation of Manila this month, came and went without much ado.

* * *

Recall that June 2004 was the 50th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy. There was a great celebration by the Allied nations, and for the first time the German prime minister was in attendance. In the months that followed, many persons attached to the significant events in the Pacific Theater of 60 years ago.

But the 60th anniversary would have been a great time to have had a movie on the raid, once upon. For one thing, recalling the heroism of Filipino and American defenders would most helped restore the tarnished spirit among those still reeling from the effects of the Feb. 24 people power revolution. Sadly, the spirit of nationalism among Filipinos is could have played up on the "historic ties" between the Americans and Filipinos who fought side by side in World War II. Or, as Sides called it, "the first time Filipino guerrillas in their "Great Raid," named Sergt. Yoso 44 movie-old, was presented by the US Embassy. It could have maximized the occasion by inviting families of US veterans, ignoring the events of 1946, when a big chunk of the government's infrastructure agency and its veterans arm—and the biggest losers were the Filipinos.

* * *

Last Saturday I plugged the Valentine movie and special to be conducted by the Bernas-vallis housing subsidiary for ailing marriages, to be held on Sagarmay under the spiritual guidance of Cardinal Sin. Due to the Cardinal's illness, the weekend program has to be postponed to Feb. 25-27 due to unforeseen circumstances.

The stalker

I don't mind walking but for almost a year now I've been seeing up his schedule and following him around. I have spent many sleepless nights thinking about him. So far enough to be wouldn't notice and I would just stare at his face for hours. I've been seeing his name at the back of my notebook, on my pens, on tables and sidewalks, on almost anything you can imagine. But everything must come to an end.

I first saw him in the summer time in the first quarter of the year 2003. I overheard a group of girls talking and seeing his name scattered around his Thursday notebook. I asked who he was and they told me he was a senior student in the Arts and Sciences department. I was so curious for many days, so I spied on him.

There is one period in which he is free every Thursday, so I always follow him there. I would sit behind him and watch him. I would stare at his face for hours. I would memorize his every move. I would always remain in the same position. I would always remain in the same position. I would always remain in the same position.

I have

Remembering the FQS

PEOPLE seem to remember what happened 35 years ago (Jan. 26-30, 1970), when the so-called First Quarter Storm (FQS) broke out? Not many, I suppose. Initially, former student activists in their 50s.

Make-eyed corrupt or national democratic from organizations in the '70s were often treated to the story of the foolish old men who were leading the movement that blinded his view of the sun from his house.

Bedeviled and inspired in by his neighbors because of his pain) route—a quote and a pain—he solemnly declared: "I may not live long enough to see the democratic revolution, but my children, my grandchildren and the generation after them shall."

Many of us who survived the martial law era have gone different ways. Some were in the opposite side, becoming the destroyers and tormentors of those who have partaken in the struggle. Many were lost: considerable lives in their chosen professions or in in financial positions.

Those who gave their lives for the cause are now mostly forgotten, unfortunately replaced by cliches heroes and television idols.

There are still, however, "feisty old men" persisting in the struggle for national freedom and democracy. Fortunately, the generations after the '70s continue to have "children and grandchildren" who continue the work after them.

In my mid 30s and no longer active politically, I see only remnants, saddened by those who left along the way but gladdened by the younger forces of genuine change who have taken over from my generation and who continue the struggle in the streets, the campuses of elsewhere, even in the mountains.

No matter how small or insignificant my contribution was then, I took part. In the FQS and I am proud enough to remember it even in my feminine heart. How foolish am I growing to be an old man!

—ANDRE SOLA, Manila
4229 Gen. A. Parada St., San Jose, Sarmac, Mkt

DBP on Steelcorp's plant in Batangas

THE NEWS item titled "Steel mill permit" (PDI, 1/18/05) reported that the said representation plant of Steel Corporation of the Philippines (Steelcorp) has an environmental clearance certificate and was energized at PDIP mill but that the release of a P15-million fund was facilitated by a high-ranking officer of the Development Bank of the Philippines.

Allow us to clarify the following:

1. The DBP approved a P900-million loan facility on 19/Oct/04, to partially finance the installation of pollution control equipment and facilities at Steelcorp's integrated steel plant in Bataan, Batangas.

2. The project was financed by the DBP through its Environmental Infrastructure Support Credit Program (EISCP), a facility for pollution control projects, funded by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

3. Steelcorp holds an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) 2A0-98-120-961 issued on June 4, 1998 by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. It likewise holds a valid Permit to Operate, also issued by the DENR, which is valid up to 08-28, 2005, renewable annually.

4. The said rejuvenation plant, one of several steps and pollution control facilities, is an integral part of the entire plant but an expansion project. It prevents the discharge of hazardous, acidic waste into the environment.

Steelcorp has been faithfully complying with the regulatory requirements of the DENR and with the standards set for wastewater effluents and air emissions. The company has been furnishing the DBP with the required quarterly reports from its pollution control officer, as well as hazardous waste generation reports.

The DENR, specifically Region 4-A, has provided the DBP with a copy of the latest air quality monitoring conducted at the plant's hotel on Sept. 13-14, 2004. The results showed compliance with all emissions under the Clean Air Act standards. These are used by the DENR as basis for renewing the company's Permit to Operate.

5. For the record, the DBP followed a very stringent process on loan approvals and release, thus ensuring that all transactions are transparent and above-board. The decision-making process is collegial; no one individual can decide on any matter within the credit process. She in place is a system that will not tolerate or allow any officer to influence the credit process in any corrupt manner or manner.

—GLORIA L. FERNANDEZ, vice president and head, Corporate Affairs, Development Bank of the Philippines, (edo@devbankphil.com.ph

DBP may now head on the request of Batangas government officials, including the provincial governor, those official who were shocked by the discovery that the acid-generation plant had already been operating for as many years without their knowing it. The information on the complicity and the release of a P15-million fund came from a DBP employee whose name was mentioned in the story.

—REI MACEDO-LUBEL, correspondent, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LETTERS

VAT not meant to benefit Filipinos

THIS FOR EFFIES is strongly appealing to our consumers not to pass the proposed hike of 2 percentage points in the Value-Added Tax as it would aggravate the economic misfortune of many marginalized sectors. According to the Bible Bereksiyonin think, there are 12 million Filipinos subsisting on less than $1 a day. There are the people who cannot afford another increase in food prices.

What is so repulsive about the VAT is that it exempts other tax-rich which could otherwise afford to pay, such as the independent power producers. These IPPs, according to Sec. Raffy Alejo, pay a measly 1.5 percent tax on their gross sales, while teachers are burdened more.

Moreover, the government is pushing for the VAT increase not because it wants to provide more funds to services, primarily to ease additional revenues for debt payments. This is one major reason why people are very reluctant to agree to the proposed increase. Even if President Macapagal-Arroyo, for all issues they're not going to honor.

We hope our concerns would not be swayed by the promises of promises, projects or funds dangled by the executive branch.

—KAPIT-BISIG SERVICES, policy advocacy officer, Fund Free Information & action Network, 2149-B Hidel Reyes St., Malate, Manila

Unfair to 'Unificationists'

MY LATE exception to the news report, "Filipinos wanted against marrying former 'Moonies'" (PDI, 1/29/05) which sensationalized a press release of the Department of Foreign Affairs unfairly portraying the Unification Church as engaged in the trafficking of Filipino women.

The Unification Church is not into luring Filipino women into marrying former "Unificationists." Our practice of mass-wed marriage strictly applies to our members. Marriage takes place only after months or couples successfully pass a process of thorough counseling on the responsibilities of marriage and raising a family. Marriage among races is seen by our faith as a key to promoting world peace and unity in this spirit, our Filipino members (male and female) have been blessed in marriage to other nationals who are not necessarily Koreans.

Secondly, members of our marriage programs who travel to South Korea comply with all government requirements and procedures. They are properly and legally documented. They go there visas through the Korean Embassy in Manila. When they leave, they are met by church members, and when they arrive in Seoul they are met by church members. Our congregation would never be involved in the illegal entry of Filipinos to Korea.

Records show that the businesses apprehended for illegal practices are in no way connected with our church. Upon learning that some Filipino Unificationists married to Koreans tried to arrange similar marriages for their relatives without our knowledge, we reported this to Filipino authorities for proper action.

Third, the case of the Filipina Unificationists who have gone to Korea have wound up in nightclubs. We can say proudly that Filipina Korean marriages in our church have a 90-percent success rate, well above the norm for marriages in Korea and elsewhere. This is because aside from taking care of preparing our members for marriage, our church also makes as a community in helping their build their families. We are ready to cooperate with the Philippine Embassy in Korea if it wants to meet with Filipino-Korean families in society.

Finally, we protest the use of the term "Moonies" to refer to Unificationists. This word of ridicule has rightly been judged in the United States and elsewhere as bigoted, prejudicial and injurious to our religious rights.

Finally, the Unification Church is engaged in many worldwide activities and programs. It enjoys a position of respect in many parts of the world. Besides practicing anti-Semitism, we actively foster understanding among all religious congregations, promote peace in divided regions like the Middle East, strengthen the family as an institution, and stand up in the fight against drugs and AIDS. Many of the top political, religious and civic leaders can serve to the integrity of our organization.

—DR. MICHAEL O. TAYLOR, president, Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 30 Samat Avenue, South Triangle, Diliman, Quezon City

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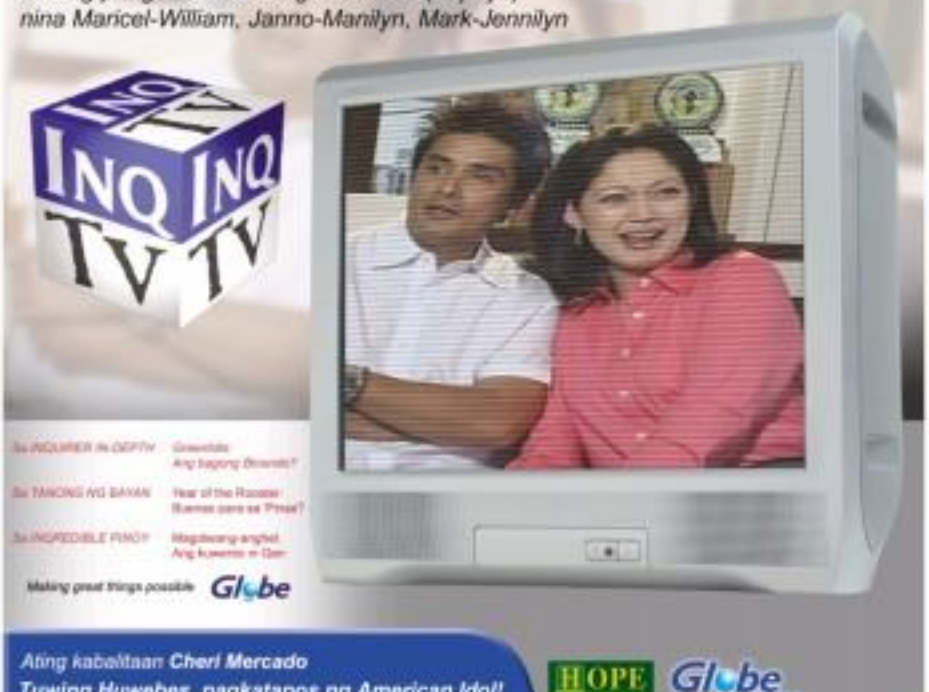
LOVE TEAMS, FOREVER
Di lang pang-Valentine: Mga kuwento (at payo)
nina Maricel-William, Janno-Manilyn, Mark-Jennilyn



Ating kabalitaan Cheri Mercado
Tuwing Huwebes, pagkatapos ng American Idol!
HOPE Globe

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Edna Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florante G. Solmirano

Tagaytay feasts on love, thanksgiving

By Mei Magsino Gubbi
Tagaytay City

WHEN the Marcos regime was building the Palace in the Sky on Mt. Gonzales in Barangay Dapdap, Tagaytay City in 1981, construction workers tried to blaze the rocky mountain with dynamite but failed.

According to local residents, the workers stopped clearing the place when they found a woman's statue buried there and set up a shrine for the Our Lady of Fair Love on the mountain peak, the highest point in Tagaytay (820 meters above sea level).

The residents believe that the shrine is watching over and protecting the city known for its breathtaking and spectacular view of Taal Volcano and its cool fresh air.

"Every time Taal Volcano erupts, only the volcano island and Tabaya town are affected," said city public information officer Jane Ajero Alonzo.

Bigger tourism arrivals

While news about the eruptions spreads, we get bigger tourism arrivals because the [visitors] want to see the erupting volcano, which is really a beautiful sight[to behold]," she said.

For that national wonder, Tagaytay will celebrate its thanksgiving on Feb. 12-14. The event coincides with Valentine's Day and the feast day of the Our Lady of Fair Love.

The shrine's image is one of only two pieces in the world. The original piece is in Navarre, Spain, where it is known as the patron saint of lovers. The Philippines has the replica which was brought by the Salesian brothers in December 1974.

Second time

Tagaytay is holding the festival for the second time. Last year, the celebration was made simple in order to avoid politicking by election candidates who were campaigning then.

Mayor Abraham Tolentino had wanted to have just one fiesta for the whole city, Ajero said. Tagaytay's two patrons, Lourdes and Nuestra Señora Soledad, celebrate separate fiestas on Feb. 11 and June 27, respectively.

The lavish celebrations were too much for households, the city official said. On Dec. 1, 2002, the city council passed an ordinance designating Feb. 13 as Thanksgiving Day.

"The Lady of Fair Love is our unifying symbol in celebrating thanksgiving. And her feast day is Feb. 14, which is a good timing for our love festival," she said.

But she clarified that the Our Lady of Fair Love is not the patron saint of Tagaytay.

Tagaytay, according to Ajero, has no old national tradition like the Sinulog of Cebu, because most of the people in the charcoal city are migrants.

"And since this is the City of Character, with the Our Lady of Fair Love looking after us, we chose to celebrate the festival on the Lady's feast day, Valentine's Day."

This year's celebration will culminate with the thanksgiving Mass on Feb. 14, after the walk to the shrine.

3 days

Ajero said the activities would include a mountain bike challenge, marathon race, boxing, hand exhibition, Mr. Gay competition, Little Darlings of Tagaytay singing contest for children, and a dance group contest.

A street party, fireworks display and awarding of booming visit to City Hall employees and area families will also be held, she said.

Yolanda Macaraeg, president of the Tagaytay Tourism Council, said 90 percent of all the restaurants and hotels would give 10-20 percent discounts.

A different kind of love

On Feb. 13, the Brahma Kumaris Center for Spiritual Learning at 1020 Magallanes Drive will have a forum that, it hopes, will enable participants to understand how certain types of love stop people from loving.

The next day, it will host a "spiritual fiesta" called "Ypanisan," which will feature games, face painting, meditation, books and compact disks. There will also be video showing and talks on positive thinking and everyday spirituality.

A discussion on "Food and Soul" is also scheduled on the same day, when plant-based dishes will be served.

"It's the only love festival in the Philippines and we're inviting everybody to come up to Tagaytay to celebrate a very unique and romantic Valentine's Day here," Bruno said.

THE SHRINE of the Our Lady of Fair Love on Mt. Gonzales, the highest point in Tagaytay City

'A tsunami of humanitarian gestures'

By Dolly Mallari Jr.
Laguna City

DESPITE the loss of a worker while helping prepare relief goods for calamity victims in northern Quezon, the host of a local cable television program has launched another campaign of assistance, riding on human generosity, especially during this season of the hearts.

"With the generous response of Quezonians from all walks of life in our previous campaign drive, we decided to once more tap their generosity in time for Valentine's," said Arnel Ariola, host of "Pag-ibayuin Natin," a daily program aired over DZSE and DwEZ-AM in Lucena City.

The information campaign, dubbed "Isday ang Puso Para sa Biktu Dezi" (Infanta-General Nakar)" started last month, courtesy of UNA, a cable TV station owned and operated by Antot Tiamzon Cable Holdings Inc.

Ariola said he was still overwhelmed by the flood of donations of assorted relief goods—rice, canned goods, clothes and blankets, among many relief items.

Scream of donations

"I did not expect the heart-warming response from my listeners. This only proves that UNA, despite being a small entity, has the power of media in generating support for a worthy endeavor," he said.

"No amount of relief goods will be enough for the continuing suffering of typhoon victims. Now that government resources are dwindling, the private sector should continue to chip in to keep the donations coming for the sake of the poor victims."

The local government units in the Bicol area, through their usual welfare offices, have been implementing the food for work program to help calabido-ize areas because of the dwindling stock of relief goods.

Ariola recalled that during the first days of their earlier relief campaign after the series of typhoons struck in late year, the bulk of donations from civic groups, concerned individuals and government agencies occupied almost every area of the cable TV station's newly constructed studio-complex in Dalahican Extn. in Barangay Ibabang Dupay.

Ariola said his program was able to gather at least six truckloads of assorted relief goods donated by farmers last December.

Peso coins

It was a "tsunami of humanitarian gestures," he said in describing the public response to his plea.

He recalled how the teachers from Gumaca Pilot II Elementary School brought to the TV station P2,500 in piso coins that were contributed by the students.

"They told me that the one-peso campaign drive was spearheaded by the students themselves without prodding from the teacher from Grade 1 pupils nonetheless. That information helped open the floodgates for more donations," Ariola said.

A group of Quezon policewomen, police trainees from the Regional Police Training School in Camp Nakar and civilian volunteers helped in the preparation of the relief goods. Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala shouldered the cost of ferrying the relief goods from Mauban port to Real town.

Ariola said his program was able to collect about P1 million worth of assorted relief goods.

Provincial Board Member Sally Portes shouldered the payment for the cargo trucks.

For transparency, Ariola published the complete list of donors and their donations in the sixteenth of one section of "Ang Outos Natin," a local weekly newspaper.

Sharing on Valentine's

Ariola said they would bring the relief goods to northern Quezon on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

"We want to share with the calamity victims the genuine concern of a Quezonian to a fellow Quezonian in distress on that very special day," he said.

The death of Rolando Cayanan, a Infanta television reporter, had inspired all the station personnel to strive for the success of the solicitation drive.

Cayanan, a television cameraman, suffered a fatal heart attack on Dec. 8 while helping unload donated donations.

CALAMITY victims in northern Quezon swarm around the truck carrying relief goods solicited by a radio and television program hosted by Arnel Ariola

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SUSPENDED!

Booba gets Laguardia's goat

By Herbert S. Cruz

TELEVIEWERS will be seeing less of the antics of Ethel Booba, one of the hosts of "Extra Challenge," this month. The show's producers suspended the comedian after the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board complained about the "excessively sexy" outfits she wore on TV.

Ethel has been prohibited from appearing in any GMA 7 show other than "Extra Challenge" from Feb. 1 to Feb. 28, according to a news item (several programs management head Jun Mar) that used to the MTRCB.

"We are taking this action in connection with the complaints regarding Ms Booba's attire on 'All Star S' last Jan. 30," Mendoza said.

MTRCB chair Marissa Laguardia noted that Ethel violated the "PG" classification allowed for TV.

The comedian's outfit on said show was "inappropriate" because the neckline was too low and exposed almost her entire breast, Laguardia told Inquirer Entertainment on Tuesday.

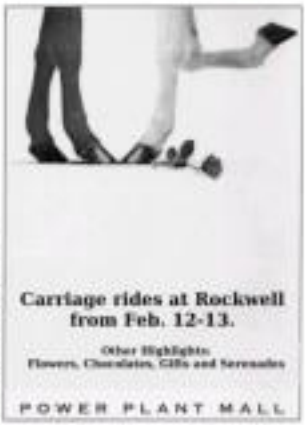
This suspension was Ethel's second. The producers did not allow her to appear in the Jan. 4 episode of "Extra Challenge" because she had worn similarly suggestive outfits in previous episodes. Laguardia had met the duo before with Ethel, Abacan, and production unit manager Margie Bautista, to discuss the case.

Ethel apologized afterwards, Laguardia said, but "she was not remorse ... she did it again."

The MTRCB exec said Ethel blamed her designer and producers for the sexy outfits. "Ethel said they provided the clothes that she used on the show. Herwin talked with her designer to make sure that the violations would not be repeated."

Earlier her clothes on "All Star K," Laguardia said, "She has no sport sense. She picked those clothes herself. I told Mr. Abacan not to bring Ethel to the MTRCB office again."

Last October, the censors warned Tess Zoe, host of "Bora Dito" on ABS-CBN, and Regine, of "Diary Pop Superstar" on GMA 7, for wearing "inappropri" outfits on TV.



Carriage rides at Rockwell from Feb. 12-13.

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POWER PLANT MALL

MTRCB PG-13

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R-13

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MTRCB PG ALL AUDIENCES ADMITTED

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ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

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'Matrix' Laurence Fishburne is brilliantly ruthless.

Across the NATION

DENR cancels forest permit of ex-mayor's cooperative

Mikey washes hands of quarry scam when he was vice gov

BACOLOD CITY—Environment Secretary Michael Defensor cancelled the environmental forest management agreement in Don Salvador Benedicto that was granted to a group led by the former mayor of the town during the Estrada administration.

Defensor found that the Community Based Forest Management Agreement awarded to Isbalue agro-forestry Development Association Inc. (Isbda), covering 250 hectares in Barangays Bombongan and Sunga in Don Salvador Benedicto, was irregular.

Isbda was organized by former Don Salvador Benedicto Mayor Nicholas de la Cruz Jr. and his children—Nicholas de la Cruz II, Jhon Salvador Benedicto, Thia Maria Mandie de la Cruz and Shaleen de la Cruz and other partners.

The Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) was awarded to Isbda by then Environment Secretary Antonio Cerilles on July 20, 2000.

But Defensor said investigators learned not only that 36 out of 39 Isbda members were not actual tillers of the forested area, but only one of the group's officers could be considered as a legitimate stakeholder.

Also, there was no evidence of joint undertakings between the DENR and the local government unit in community appraisal and organizing of the people's organization.

The agreement, Defensor said, "was signed in complete disregard of the process involved in the processing and issuance of the Community-Based Forest Management Agreement."

The CBFMA had long been opposed by residents of Bernaldillo and Bunga, particularly the former occupants of the area, the provincial board of Negros Occidental and environmental groups in the province.

Defensor also ordered the officers and members of Isbda to restore the area or face criminal charges in court.

He directed the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office in Negros Occidental to assess public sentiment that the area is now open for application for legal forestry production purposes.

Cecille Suerte, PDI Visayas Bureau

THRICE, as the House committee on environment and natural resources began a hearing on the controversial sand and gravel extraction operations in Pampanga, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo stressed he had no hand in the quarry operations in Pampanga.

The elder son of President Macapagal-Arroyo told the committee on Wednesday that the collection of quarry taxes was "purely an executive function."

Arroyo also noted that his classifications he put on record after the committee, chaired by Agusan del Norte Rep. Jose Aquiles Barzaga, included data showing big discrepancies in quarry revenues generated by the National Resources Development Corp. (NRDC) and the provincial government from 1999 to 2004.

Arroyo was the Pampanga vice governor from 2001 to 2004, during the last term of now Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid who then chaired the provincial quarry task force.

The difference amounted to P224 million, Pampanga Fist District Auditor Gonzalo Garcia told the committee.

The hearing was ordered on the request of Pampanga Rep. Reynaldo Sapitio who filed Resolution 267 that sought an inquiry into the "income-generating projects of the Aurora Pacific Economic Zone (Apeco) and the quarrying activities" in the light of the increased and local fiscal deficit.

Asked by the lawmakers after the two hour hearing why he stressed in his defensive, Arroyo said: "The media and the opposition might again put some bullet in this."

"The vice governor has no power or [to] manage[ing] quarry collections and operations," he said.

Also at the hearing, an angry Arroyo castigated Presidential Administrator Fidel Ayroso for betraying assignments on the law while he was just a lawyer.

Ayroso, the representative of Gov. Mark Lapid in the hearing, was explaining the laws that gave exclusive powers to the local government to collect taxes.

Ayroso immediately apologized. Arroyo again found himself apologizing, this time to Barzaga. He did so after he cited the illegality of Proclamation No. 66, which named President Joseph Estrada board and which was the basis of the NRDC takeover of quarry operations in 1999.

Barzaga asked Arroyo if it was wrong for the President to negotiate local governments.

Also during the hearing, cited is Gen. Hene Corpuz, NRDC chair, assisted Arroyo by misleading the committee on the income raised by the NRDC.

Arroyo said he only repeated the figures not the total collections because the NRDC had not furnished reports on the latter.

Arroyo and provincial officers Regina Garcia and Virgel Yabut found themselves tangled against Arroyo, Aquiles and Pampanga Rep. Francis Nepomuceno.

Barzaga asked Arroyo to advise Governor Lapid to appear in the next hearing.

The seven provincial board members who attended Resolution No. 3, which Gozzo certified as urgent, were also invited to appear in the next hearing.

The resolution urged Lapid to enter into an agreement with the NRDC as the regional collecting agent for quarry taxes.

Arroyo told the committee several times that the provincial government was not opposing the NRDC proposal. Thirty were, he pointed out. Legal obstacles to the plan. Rosalie Ocupia, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Artists help pave way for Panagbenga feast

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The next time you and/or tourists flood Session Road, create a volunteer group of artists here for the city mascots that you would step on.

On Tuesday, artists Earnapacific Guia and Kgan Benino led a group of artists who volunteered to repaint the cracked and chipped-off portions of Session's sidewalks by covering and giving them artsy colorful broken tiles.

Dr. Guia, son of filmmaker Eddie Tuliado, said they turned the damaged portions of the sidewalks into a mosaic as their contribution to the city's preparations for the Baguio Flower Festival or Panagbenga.

He said they also volunteered to do what personnel of the city engineer's office had failed to do—repair the sidewalks that were aged portions that had ripped a number of pedestrians.

The cracks have pastoral pedestrians, particularly the elderly.

Tuliado said the Guia was also encouraged by the cracks and tiles damaged his son to paint on the pavements.

Dr. Guia met with Mayor Braulio Yaranon two weeks ago and proposed his street art project on Session Road by saying the damaged portions were sidewalks with cement and recycled tiles.

"When we spoke to Mayor Yaranon, it turned out that their office had been hearing a lot of complaints about the cracks. Yaranon said there was a plan to save it and when we brought up the proposal, he allowed us to do it. So, the project was implemented immediately," said Guia.

Since the city government said resources were limited, Dr. Guia and his artist friends pooled their money to buy cement, adhesives and broken tiles to get the best out of the limited budget.

Dr. Guia said they bought the broken tiles from hardware stores for P70-100 a box.

Later, donations for additional construction materials arrived from various construction supplies stores and churches in the city.

But not all residents approved the artists' efforts.

They were criticized by some owners of business establishments along Session Road for supposedly defacing the floor of their premises.

On Friday a resident scolded the artists for taking too long in repairing the sidewalks.

The residents, who considered a senior citizens' group in the city, was carrying a copy of a directive from Yaranon, which gave the artists until Feb. 4 to complete the project.

Dr. Guia managed to put up a calm face amid the criticisms.

However, he said those statements disappointed them.

He said the artists were determined to finish what they started.

"The designs of the mosaic come out spontaneously, so maybe your self are now colorful like in different sizes, shapes and forms," Dr. Guia said.

He said some designs would help set up the Panagbenga mood in the city following the snow brought by repairs on pavements, a fatal streak of meningitis, in Baguio recently.

"Instead of seeing people smearing surgical masks on their face, this time it is nicer to see artists doing something colorful. Maybe, you could call this color my shoes on Session," he said.

ARTISTS do their share in preparations for the Panagbenga.

Pampanga board seeks review of North toll

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Pampanga provincial board on Monday ordered its committee on good governance to file urgent, motion for the temporary restraining order to help stop the 400-percent increase in rates, according to Pampanga Board Member Aurelio Gonzales, the league's vice chair.

Although the SRR has approved the new rates, it has yet to announce the date on which the Manila North Tollways Corp. can start collecting those, MNTC president Jose de Jesus said.

The MNTC—a joint venture of the Lopez-family owned First Philippine Infrastructure Corp., Groupe Egis, Leighton International and the state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp.—rehabilitated and expanded the 84-km toll highway at cost of P18.2 billion.

Spanning more than 80 km from Balintawak, Quezon City, to San Jose in Mabalacat, Pampanga, it was the biggest toll road project undertaken by a private company since the 1970s.

The "open system" from Balintawak and say not apply to Bocaue charges a flat rate of P42.

Opening rates as per kilometer for the "closed system" Discourse to San Jose were set at P2.40 for cars (Class 1), P4.32 for buses (Class 2), P5.52 for trucks (Class 3) and P7.92 for trucks and other heavy vehicles (Class 4). The overnight easing of the gates in recent weeks lowered the rates by a centavo.

The PNCC, the original operator of the NLEx, opted to collect P2.00, P3.60, P4.80 and P6.70, respectively, for the same classes of vehicles.

Asked on Tuesday for comment on the new tolls of greater, De Jesus said: "They are entitled to their rights to do [that] to demand for increased as the TOR."

He anticipated the actual takeover of the NLEx's operations not later than Feb. 15.

De Jesus defended the new rates, saying these were determined from the P0.82 per km base toll rate approved in 1998 under the concessionary supplemental Toll Operating Agreement (TOA).

Foreign exchange and inflation rates drove the fees up. The MNTC, he said, was not passing on to the toll the additional construction cost of around P7 billion.

In a forum here Monday, he said MNTC rates were still lower and more reasonable compared to those collected at the South Luxon Expressway.

Fidencio Orejan with a report from Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

8 die in separate road accidents on NLEx

Eight people were killed while six others were hurt in separate accidents along the North Luzon Expressway here and in Cagayan on Wednesday and Monday, respectively.

In the city, four people died instantly when a truck and a van collided at the Barangay San Jose segment of the North Luzon Expressway at 3:57 a.m. Wednesday, a report from the Philippine National Construction Corp. said.

The PNCC traffic management division identified the fatalities as Romy Gaquete, 41; Andrew Dumanda, 41; Benjamin Lebing, 62; and Rio Chatterjee, 31.

The four, all from Baguio City, were passengers of an Isuzu Crossroad van.

According to the PNCC, the van was coming along the NLEx's southbound lane when a northbound 10-wheel truck careered in its lane.

The PNCC report said the truck driver, Freddie Maltezano, lost control of the steering wheel. Maltezano was arrested by members of the Traffic Management Group in Angeles City.

Three other persons were reported hurt in the accident. They were identified as Shaneen Rincon and Gilbert Dumawes, both passengers of the van, and Benny Ruiz, truck helper.

In Cagayan, four people were killed while six was reported missing after a pickup truck hit a tricycle in Barangay Riverside in Tuguegarao City on Monday night.

Senior Supt. Rodrigo de Guzman, Cagayan police director, identified the victims as Elvira Alan, his wife Bonita, his daughter Princess, 3, and son Dominic, 11.

Missing was Evelyn Blanquia, wife of tricycle driver Norberto Blanquia.

De Guzman said the Alans' pickup truck was negotiating a bridge on Pinacanauan River and hit Blanquia's tricycle.

The impact caused the truck to fall into the river. The tricycle's passengers also fell off the river after the collision.

Norberto, his daughter Joyce and son Marilyn Barsoy survived the accident and were taken to the People's Emergency Hospital in Tuguegarao. Rosario Ocupia, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Alexander Galido and Alfonso Manjar Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Glass shard found in medicine for pneumonia

BATOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya— Gov. Lutin Cummins has ordered an investigation of the alleged presence of glass shards in medicines being bought by the provincial government.

Cummins ordered the inquiry following her wife's discovery of what appeared to be a glass shard (Tsalong) inside a sealed vial of an injectable drug.

Lawyer Donderia Rose, executive assistant for legal affairs, said Cummins's wife followed a complaint of Dr. Fe Agnes Tolosa, chief of the provincial government hospital in Bambang, Dupax del Norte, some 25 km from here.

Tolosa said a nurse found the object sealed inside a 250-mg vial of powdered hydrocortisone sodium succinate as she was about to inject the medicine in a patient suffering from chronic pneumonia.

"The presence of a foreign object in a bottle of medicine for intravenous administration and a life-saving medicine at that, exists the kind of quality control the medicines passed through," Rose said.

"It also creates doubts on the quality of the medicine especially its potency, efficacy and safety," she said.

Batbalo said doctors often call hydrocortisone a wonder drug for its ability to reverse patients to life-and-death situations.

The drug's label showed that it was manufactured by Ismaeli Pharma Pvt. Ltd. based in Bombay, India, and distributed in the Philippines by Philippine Pharmaceuticals Inc.

Records from the provincial provincial secretary's office show that the hydrocortisone vials were included in a single purchase of generic medicines worth P132,800 last year. Each vial costs P94.50.

The medicines were supplied by AMG Medical and Trading Inc. based in Baguio City, which submitted the lowest price quotation during the bidding, said Eileen Dacuycuy, purchasing officer.

Contacted for comment, an AMG representative referred to a written letter from Rajiv Shah of Ismaeli Pharma in Himalaya Building Annex, regulatory head of Philippine Pharmaceuticals.

In that letter, Shah said their company has been manufacturing drugs "under strict compliance with good manufacturing practices, set (forth) by the World Health Organization."

He cited the procedures performed by its quality assurance unit, including a "sterility test to ensure that the product is free from any bacterial or fungal contamination."

Perhaps the only logical explanation so can given for the possible chipping of the molded glass vial commonly happening in the "stretch area" of the vial," Shah said.

He said this might have happened due to the "significant pressure and weight of the molded vials during washing and bundling process." Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Warplanes pound rebel ranks; 3,000 civilians flee

From page A1

tation hundreds of rebels ambushed a convoy of soldiers in Shiddal town. They also staged attacks in three other municipalities.

Casualty figures

Brig. Gen. Agustin Dumlao, chief of the military's Task Force Comet, reported yesterday that 22 soldiers had so far been killed. He also confirmed that the number of wounded soldiers had risen to 38.

"It's unavoidable. Every operation, we suffer casualty," Dumlao said.

Southcom chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza vowed to continue the "punitive" action against Abkhair's followers, who attacked several military detachments on Monday.

"Since Monday we have lost 10 soldiers, but we killed about 45 rebels in our punitive actions," Braganza told reporters in Manila.

He have already discovered their mass graves, that's where we got the figures," Braganza said.

Some of the slain soldiers were already brought here.

Matteo commander Brig. Gen. Hilario Aliaga said the wounded soldiers had been brought to the Valiente Medical Center in Metro Shiddal and to the military hospital here and in Iligan.

Ceasefire appeal

In an emergency meeting in Iligan, the Provincial Crisis Management Committee yesterday adopted a resolution "supporting the appeal of the concerned citizens of Sulu and Mindanao" for an immediate ceasefire.

Iligan vice Mayor Jaime Ledesma, retired Abdulbasis Jimmyh of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to negotiate with Abkhair Shiddal's group. Jimmyh left Jolo at around 2 p.m. yesterday.

Malik's force is being sustained by followers of Jolkanddal Misuari, a nephew of Misuari, Jimmyh said. Jolkanddal led the MNLF faction that seized the Cotabato complex in Zamboanga City in November 2001.

Jimmyh lost the blessings of Chairman Nur Misuari and Basilan Speaker Jose de Venecia," Leong said.

"We want to investigate how this attack incident started," the governor told reporters after meeting senior military commanders at an Army base near Jolo's main airport.

"I was told there were many civilian casualties in the mountain villages. Please quote them."

Land mines

The emergency meeting was held in the wake of offensives coordinated by rebel group to ensure of dangers posed by land mines reportedly planted by the rebels.

Earlier, the local Red Cross chapter said it was having difficulty reaching evacuees in the besieged areas because of the land mines.

Hoki Chiong, Red Cross provincial administrator, said the explosives were discovered along the roads leading to the affected villages.

Some 1,500 families are scattered in various parts of Lindi, Panamao and Pualosa Bellar towns and most of them are running out of provisions.

Some also need journeys to take up in Panamao had already razed up, but there is still strong resistance in Barangay Bihanag, also in Panamao. He put the number of the MNLF insurgents in the town at 400.

Lt. Gen. Efraim Abinoja ordered reporters in Camp Apolinario yesterday that another Muslim battalion was dispatched from Zamboanga City to augment government forces in Jolo. The brings to around 3,000 from an initial

ONE of 20 wounded soldiers is loaded on a military plane at the Jolo airport on Wednesday as the gun battle between alleged Misuari followers and government troops continues in Sulu. The body count stands at 10 rebels and 20 soldiers killed. —

to November 2001 when Indonesian hospital land civilians hostage inside the Cotabato City Complex in Zamboanga City. He surrendered following the holding of new elections for leadership of the ARMM.

That same month, Misuari was captured in Malaysia and was deported to Manila in January 2002. He is detained in Fort Bonifacio in connection with rebellion charges.

Earlier, Braganza had said the latest attacks were aimed at preventing the government to open Illanun to a dominion still in Sulu.

Evacuees

Sulu Governor Loong said he had sought assistance from other provinces to accommodate the evacuees. He said he had coordinated with Presidential assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza for additional support, particularly food and other provisions.

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman said personnel from the provincial social welfare office were already assisting about 3,000 evacuees. "We have already established evacuation centers (in Jolo), our people know what to do," she said in an interview.

Braganza, who visited Jolo yesterday, said the military would continue to hold pressure against the renegades. He was seen in the company of two unidentified US military officials at the military headquarters in Jolo town.

Reached by the inquirer through his mobile phone, Braganza said the presence of the US military officials at the height of the operations against the Misuari followers was not unusual.

"They are our consultants," he said.

He declined to comment when asked whether the US officials were directly taking part in preparing the battle plans against the rebels.

Amid clash with soldiers

In Cotabato City, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front ordered its guerrillas in Sulu to avoid clashes with the soldiers.

"They were under orders to remain in their areas and observe the ongoing ceasefire agreement with the government," Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, commander of the Western Area Police Office, placed the whole of Zamboanga Peninsula under red alert. Most of the rebels involved in the fighting had relatives including MILF spokespersons, said.

Police prepared

He said the police were prepared against any possible threat.

"We have many police personnel in this city, in the absence of Task Force Zamboanga presence, the PNP can handle the situation," Querol said. Jaime S. Laude, Jr. Jaime, with reports from Thessaloniki Jol Guzman and Edwin O. Fernandez, RDI Mindanao Bureau, Alexis Pupa in Manila, and Inquirer wires

16 penniless Pinoy 'tourists' held at Naia

From page A1

work there)," the man, who declined to give his name, said. "I can't understand why we're here. We're not under Government's agencies."

Usual reasons

Another passenger, who also declined to give his name, said he was a truck driver from Catabato and was on his way to Dubai to attend his aunt's wedding.

He, however, could not recall if his aunt, who he said paid for his ticket, was to be married on Feb. 16 or Feb. 17. But he insisted that he would be coming in Jordan for only a month.

Castro said that the reasons given by the two passengers interviewed by the Inquirer were typical the most common that the tourist workers would give to the BABITE.

Illegal recruiters in UAE

"Weddings, invitation by friends, or to be with a sister about to give birth, these are their usual alibis," Castro said.

Castro said the BABITE had received informa-

tion that illegal recruiters based in the UAE would sell package deals—consisting of an airline ticket and a valid visa—to prospective employees' relatives already in the Middle Eastern country for an estimated 1,500 dollars, or some P80,000.

The relatives, in turn, would send them to the Philippines.

Verification process

The 20 had yet to check in for the Thai Airways flight TG 621 when BABITE agents asked them to proceed to their 4th floor office at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) for questioning.

Their passports and visas were held until the BABITE is able to verify the purpose of their travel. Part of the verification process is calling up the passengers' relatives in their destinations.

Stop undocumented workers

The BABITE was created last year by President Macapagal-Arroyo to help curb the problem of undocumented Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

'Presidential Valentine's gift . . .

From page A1

He said the government workers are among those reeling from the high cost of basic goods, unabated oil price hikes, tax rates and unjustifiably deducted from their meager salary and an impending increase in the value-added tax.

Gutay pointed out that government workers' salaries have remained frozen since 2001 values, a 9 percent salary increase equivalent to a measly P19-25 per day or P200 a month was implemented.

"Since then, the employees have been clamoring for a pay hike but their demand has fallen on deaf ears," Gutay said.

DepEd employees, too

Public school teachers and other employees of the Department of Education were also dismissed at the "pittance" they would get as cash gift.

"We were made to wait for three months and now we're just getting P1,000. We haven't received any salary increase for the last four years. How far can P1,000 go? It's a pittance," said Domingo Alibio, president of the teachers-labor employees union of the DepEd.

He said DepEd employees, which make up half of the entire bureaucracy, were upset at the losing end.

He cited that employees in other government agencies and in most local government units had each received P5,000 cash gift last December.

He submitted his list to reporters but he relied on loose talk from some DepEd employees who have relatives in other government agencies.

Loans

"Once we get confirmation that those in other agencies got more than P1,000 in cash gift, we're going to go out to the streets. Magsisilbo kami, (We're going to protest)" Alibio said.

He said most employees had already taken out loans because they expected to get the same P5,000 cash gift they received in December 2003.

"We are really very dismayed. After waiting for so long, we only get this," Alibio said.

Gov't savings

Earlier, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Ms. dumps decided to distribute the productivity enhancement pay among the personnel of the bureaucracy as a reward for the successful compliance with the austerity measures which included cancellation of seminars, parties, foreign trips and cutbacks in electricity and fuel consumption.

Right to continue

Gutierrez said the state employees and the private sector workers deserve an increase and that they will continue the fight for a P125 hike in the minimum wage for their counterparts in the private sector.

Question of the Week

What is your reaction to Imelda Marcos' elation over the US court ruling preventing human rights victims from sharing $683 million in Marcos assets that was turned over to the government?

Senders of at least 10 texts as published in Tuesday's IngBox will each receive an "Inquirer Mug!"

Buy an inquirer news name/city/message. Text your answers to 2287 (Globe) or 333 (Smart). (Provision of 160 characters)

*Metro Manila winners can call Jaime at 8574868. Provincial winners can text inquirer ask name/city/message address to 2287 or 333 or mail picture will be mailed to them

Free snacks in store for tots

By Tarra N. Quismundo

MANILA preschoolers from 3 to 5 years old will be getting a dose of nutritious snacks for free during their stay in city-owned kindergarten, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza announced yesterday.

Aiming to raise healthy and smart kids in the city, local officials yesterday launched an extended supplemental feeding program that first took off in 2003.

"In making Manila a world-class city, we must keep our children healthy. We have to make sure that the young Manileños, especially those from poor families are getting proper nutrition," Atienza said.

The supplemental feeding program, implemented by the Manila Department of Social Welfare to help boost the mental and physical development of kids through adequate nutrition, would benefit some 17,000 students in the city's 150 daycare centers.

MANILA Mayor Lito Atienza (center in floral shirt) gives away food and drinks to school children in Manila at the launching of Atienza's program to provide children in the city with nutritious food. He is joined by Rep. Mikee Romero (left) and his son, Kim Atienza. JOY BONOAN

Veggie treats

The program's unique food menu includes the so-called Binte's Polvoron and Multi-Cupcake, made from ground vegetables collectively called Sahanap, or vitamin-rich native green leafy vegetables including kangkong, malunggay, alugbati, malunggay and pechay.

To give them veggies a child-friendly twist, the ground mixed vegetables would be flavored with ingredients such as flour, milk, sugar, salt, cornstarch and margarine.

The recipes for the innovative snacks were developed through the collaboration of the Kabalikat ng Manila, the Manila Science High School and the Department of Science and Technology and approved by the Bureau of Food and Drugs. Pitch Cheltenham P. Maglasang, Patricia

Nida case prosecutor resigns

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE LEAD government prosecutor in the Nida Blanca murder case has quit, citing the numerous other cases he was handling.

Senior State Prosecutor Aristotle Manabat said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez already approved his request to be relieved from the case starting Monday.

"Definitely said it was OK. Hopefully this would help the case," Manabat said.

He said Gonzalez explained him with Assistant Chief State Prosecutor Richard Anthony Fadullon.

Manabat said that he asked Gonzalez to relieve him because of the numerous other cases he was handling, including the P1.5 billion drug bust in Cebu in September last year.

"Most of the time, I'm flying back and forth to Cebu. Maghihabol ako ng eroplano (I'm pursued by planes)," he said.

No more delays

However, Manabat said that his relief would not delay further the issuance of subpoenas against Bureau of Customs intelligence chief Jim Cobbin Khitarine and the two women linked to Blanca's murder.

He said the two other members of the prosecution panel—Assistant Prosecutor Cecilia Santos and Myrtle Abad—already reviewed evidence, including the sworn statements of new witnesses Orlando "Boy" Delandas, Ramon Francisco, and Rodelyn "Mutya" Gonzales.

Gonzalez last month said that the DOJ would request the new and would conduct a preliminary investigation against Khitarine, Santos chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines long-time Blanca aide Efren dela Paz, and Dinah San Jose dela Paz, a second cousin of Kuya Bernie, Blanca's daughter.

Las Piñas PAO chief slain

By Nancy Carvajal

THE HEAD of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) in Las Piñas died in an ambush in front of her house yesterday morning.

Police said Atty. Victoria Yolanda Udtohan, 53, of Lot 13-B, Carmona Avenue, Phase 1 Cupertino Village, Pulang Lupa, was about to board her CRV van when four unidentified men approached the victim's vehicle.

Two of the suspects, police said, positioned themselves at the rear of the vehicle and served as backup as the two other men walked up to Udtohan and shot her several times in the head.

After the victim fell on the ground, the suspects fled on foot toward Naga Road.

The victim was immediately rushed to a nearby clinic but the attending physicians at the Zuzuarregui Medical Clinic, Dr. Cheir Hellandia, declared Udtohan dead on arrival.

Udtohan's son, Romeo, told police investigators that he was supposed to accompany his mother to the PAO's office in Quezon City for a meeting. The son also said, according to the police, that "her child not know of any threats on his mother."

Recovered from the scene were two .45 caliber shells and a 9-mm shell.

Chief Public Attorney Persida Rueda-Acosta said Udtohan was among PAO's best lawyers.

Udtohan reportedly joined PAO in 2001 on the recommendation of then Senior Secretary Marcelino Gutierrez Jr.

"I learned she was about to serve him when she was brutally killed. She was hard working and a dedicated public servant," Acosta said.

"My feeling is whoever killed her was really angry at her because she was shot in the head in front of her grandchild and her son was narrowly missed by the attackers," she added.

The chief public attorney said she could not recall any serious threat issues that Udtohan had died.

However, Acosta said, "I guess what happened to her was part of the hazards of being a public servant."

The PAO chief said Udtohan always went to her whenever the latter had an official and personal problem.

Aside from Rueda, Udtohan had a daughter. Her husband was also a government employee.

She was appointed as the PAO chief in Las Piñas in September last year. She also was also a former Nida director.

The governor's angry reaction

A LITTLE bird at the provincial capitol of Davao Oriental told me that Gov. Elmira Palma Gil reacted angrily to an item in this space on Feb. 5, in Saturday's On Target. I said that the private and public governors in my home province—Palma Gil and Rodolfo Lopez—were not doing anything about illegal logging in the province.

I said I saw thousands of logs being loaded on a ship late last year from the seashore of Mati, the capital.

When I did those logs come from, I asked, since logging operations are the monopoly of Sen. Ig Lopez, Manny entered a long time ago.

Palma Gil's reaction was typical of hers: "Wla yang kinabuhigan na logod kang Tulfo (Your words don't Tulfo-want it)."

Probably, her mind set is that money talks in Davao Oriental. Or electronic ink has it as her press—everyone—including the governor herself. That's probably the reason illegal logging proliferates in Davao Oriental, because money talks in the province.

My spy at the capitol says that Lopez's operations belonging to the provincial government used to maintain logging roads in Baganga town.

On Target

Rowena Tulfo

Before I resume that item in her column, my spy at the capitol says my note to cross-Governor Palma Gil, whose face is all over the billboards in the province proclaiming her projects.

The irony I made you angry about, Hon: Have you ever seen the big head low before your province.

* * *

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Mike Defensor should look into the alleged takeover of a 200-hectare forest reserve in Solano, Cagayan by a lawyer-politician who had reportedly bragged that he and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo were co-investors of the Mexico.

The forest reserve, which belonged to the government and cannot be expropriated by a private individual, was reportedly taken over by the lawyer-politician before the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

By the way, the widow of the late Cagayan governor and economist, Rodolfo Aguinaldo, is planning to use this lawyer-politician in court.

The widow had complained that much of her late husband's property had been titled in favor of this guy who had betrayed the Aguinaldo when he was officials.

* * *

Commission on Higher Education Chair Rolando dela Rosa should go slow in closing down several nursing schools.

The country needs new nursing schools to meet the demands of thousands of high school graduates who want to take up nursing, including doctors and other professionals. Filipino nurses are in demand in the United States and other English-speaking countries because of their knowledge of the language.

Dela Rosa, a priest who used to be an official at the University of Sto. Tomas (UST), should give new nursing schools a chance to prove their worth.

If these schools are found deficient in some areas, they should be given a chance to make up. Closing them down outright would bring about the suspicion that Dela Rosa has vested interest since the UST also has a nursing school.

OPTICAL Manila Board Chair Edu Manzano meets with Quiapo traders to discuss possible alternative livelihood for peddlers of pirated goods. Manzano (left) shakes the hand of lawyer Zaldy Bondad while Rep. Rosanna Vergara looks on. VINCENT ARBOLEDA

Options offered for fake disc vendors

By Tina G. Santos

THE OPTICAL Media Board (OMB), led by its chair Edu Manzano, yesterday met with at least 30 Muslim community leaders from Quiapo, Manila, to discuss alternative livelihood opportunities for peddlers of pirated discs.

Manzano said the leaders had asked for the intervention of the OMB to allow them to earn/work with legitimate establishments so they could sell their goods and still be considered in the market.

"The community leaders own buildings they had been leasing to vendors of fake CDs, VCDs and DVDs.

"I'm glad that they are willing to cooperate with us. The community leaders are actually looking for avenues to legitimize their businesses," Manzano said.

The OMB and the leaders have signed a Memorandum of Agreement stating that the two parties would work hand in hand to help combat, if not totally eradicate, the selling of pirated discs, and not to participate in the proliferation of pornographic materials.

Manzano explained that the move was meant not only to inform Muslim traders (but piracy is hurting legitimate businesses, but also to help peddlers of pirated products explore other livelihood opportunities.

"We want to show the vendors that they have a choice," Manzano said.

"Although it's not really to our mandate to address this problem, we feel that this option should be considered in pursuit of a solution," he added. "Although raids are an essential part of our operations, we are exploring solutions that would have a bigger welfare impact."

The OMB chief also said that based from the series of raids they conducted in the past, they realized that piracy is not just an economic problem, adding that terrorism issues in piracy because they have an elementary source of income.

"So long as the vendors are engaged in the illegal trade, they will always be vulnerable to corruption and harassment," Manzano added.

On the other hand, Al Miledenes, spokesperson and organizer of the Muslim group who had issued one of the challenges in Quiapo, said that their operations is limited to help the government's anti-piracy drive.

Miledenes said they were particularly concerned with the printing of movies and songs made in the country, as well as pornographic materials.

In an open manner, he said that his group would be forced to close down the stores of owners who do not comply with the agreement.

MetroBriefs

Councilor dies

THE DECEASED City councilor (as of 10 o'clock) in Councilor Edgardo Flores, 68, who died of heart attack early Tuesday morning.

Flores reportedly complained of dizziness and vomiting at about 7:30 a.m. and asked his orphan of water from a tank. When his son returned, he found his father barely breathing and lying face down on the floor inside his bedroom, according to staff who refused to be named, said. Flores, who was taken to the Quezon Memorial Hospital, was declared dead on arrival. Flores is survived by his wife, Edith Amores, and children Mark, Jaime, Rachel, Ana and Bernadette. The staff said Flores had a medical checkup last Monday afternoon as he was already not feeling well. Tina G. Santos

DESIGNER Blanco, the country's largest garment & footwear retail chain, recently opened its 15th franchise store in SM City Clearwater, bringing its total to 48 stores nationwide. The most beautiful and vibrantly fresh line will be offered in their most alluring and attractive packages. From left are Designer Blanco president Ting Garcia, Wynthus owner Jay Bautista, Marissa Fenton and assistant vice president Jenny Bautista.

METRO

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WATSON IN MANILA
British rocker Russell Watson is in town for a concert at the PICC tonight.

Guns for Mindanao intercepted

By Lolo B. Salaverria

THE COAST Guard intercepted yesterday afternoon a shipment of firearms headed to Zamboanga, during an inspection of suspected cargo.

The discovery of 13 Garand rifles came days after strict monitoring by Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sea marshals netted ship-ments of live ammunition and illegal substances known as "Bling-Bling" or methamphetamine hydrochloride.

Such substance is considered as a banned substance.

Food safety issues

Cedes Alinsunurin, the world body on food standards, has not recommended its use to foods as per set if issues on food safety are resolved.

The Garand rifles were discovered during an inspection made at Pier 4 by PCG and WG&A personnel as Manila's Port Area around 2 p.m., according to PCG spokesperson Lt. Senior Inspector Rolando Punzalan.

He said the firearms were in a box with markings outside about, listing the consignee as Alfalfa Appel, with a Zamboanga address.

Operatives are still looking for the person who brought the rifles to Pier 4.

Over 6,000 rounds of ammunitions for various firearms were seized from Bobby Chapina at the receiving area of the AFS/DP warehouse at Pier 8 in Tondo on Feb. 7.

The ammunition, which had been placed in a sack, was discovered by dogs from the K-9 unit.

Chapina told operatives from a WG&A police, who was only identified as "Noel," instructed him to bring the sack to Pier 14.

Chapina claimed that he did not know what the sack contained. The shipment was supposed to be brought to Iligan City.

The sack contained 2,160 rounds for a 30-60 submachine gun, 810 rounds for a .38 caliber hand gun, and 324 rounds for a 40-14 assault rifle.

He Saturday 200 grams of "Magic Liquid" were found packaged in four sacks at the WG&A watchhouse at Pier 18.

The substance, said to have originated from Indonesia, was found by a joint team of PCG sea marshals and WG&A personnel who were patrolling the area with K-9 units.

The sea marshals regularly inspect bags and packages at the ports and to passengers and cargo vessels as part of the government's anti-terrorism and anti-smuggling measures.

Jeep robber gunned down by passenger

ONE OF five alleged robbers who held up a jeepney in Manila before dawn yesterday was shot dead by one of the passengers they had victimized.

Rampor Pedilles Navarro was hit in the back of the head when he was fired upon by the unidentified passenger, who fled the crime scene after the incident in Tondo, Manila.

Police said a cell phone and some of the loot were found on Navarro, 21, of Almeda Street, Tondo.

Investigators by SPO1 Raul Olivarez showed that Navarro and four other unidentified men armed with a handgun and a Mossberg shotgun boarded a jeepney at 4:30 a.m.

After taking the passengers' valuables, the suspects got off at the corner of Batangas and Juan Luna Streets in Tondo.

Unknown to them, however, one of the passengers seated in the front seat was armed.

The unidentified passenger, who was described as 50 to 56 years old and of medium build, pulled out a gun and fired two shots at the suspects. Leila B. Salaverria

Ex-NBI agent's WPD 'allies' defy orders

By Leila B. Salaverria

NOTHING is gaining for us.

Defying their commanding officers, 11 members of the Western Police District who were relieved of their posts over alleged links to a dismissed agent of the National Bureau of Investigation refused to go to Camp Crame to be presented in a police lineup.

The no-show irked police chief Director General Edgar Aglipay who said that if the performers failed to show up today, they would be declared absent without leave.

However, Supt. Marcelino Pedroso in a letter to Aglipay said, "The police lineup is tantamount to trial by publicity."

Pedroso, who spoke in behalf of the 11 WPD members, said to head the Makati police station and is the highest ranking policeman believed to have had ties with former NBI agent Mario Soriano.

Soriano had been arrested for allegedly kidnapping a businessman on Jan. 26.

According to Pedroso's letter, should they appear at the office of Aglipay and be present, all to media it "might indicate that [we] have already been charged of any violation of the law and found guilty by the courts."

Pedroso said his 10 colleagues were made to step down from their posts because of suspicions that they were involved in illegal activities allegedly perpetrated by Soriano.

Earlier, Pedroso denied being in cahoots with Soriano, saying he only met the latter in January this year when a TV reporter introduced them. Soriano was supposed to give him information about a drug operation, which, however, did not materialize.

In his letter to Aglipay, Pedroso said that being presented in a lineup would be a violation of his and the other policemen's rights.

He expressed fear in the absence of any charges against them, they remained officers and were of good standing in the PNP.

The officer added that presenting them to media would subject them to humiliation.

"The endorsement will for sure would be supposed to shame, mockery and ridicule not only to them but to their families in the Philippine National Police, but more importantly to their respective families," the letter read.

The other WPD members who were relieved from their posts were Insp. Casan Ali, PO3 Rodolfo Endrema, PO2 Ernie Reyes, PO2 Alexander John Reyes, PO2 Bonie Marquez, SPO2 Fernando Catolico, PO1 Ronil de Guzman, SPO2 Elmer Mendoza, PO1 Ronald Alonzo and PO2 Aranio Torres. With a report from Christian S. Esguerra

SPORTS

E-mail: [illegible]

Editor: Teddyboy G. Philomeno

Globe bolsters SEAG fund by ₱100 million

By Mars Anthony Reyes

UPDATED: Inside here, marked to Row for the seventh's staging of the Southeast Asian Games in the country from Nov 27 Dec. 6.

Philippine (SEA) Organizing Committee chair Chot Puglisinan yesterday announced that telecommunications giant Globe Telecom has secured a gold sponsorship package worth ₱100 million.

The deal, forged between Puglisinan and Globe chief executive officer Gerry Ahlan last week, represented 20 percent of the target of ₱500 million set by the Philsea's financial marketing team.

The announcement came on the eve of the meeting between prospective corporate sponsors and Philsea officials led by Puglisinan, vice chair and Philippine Olympic Committee president Peping Cojuangco and first vice president Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas.

"This is certainly very encouraging. The private sector plays a very vital role in the hosting of the SEA Games and I am very confident that others will follow the lead of Globe," said Puglisinan.

The show of support somehow eased financial concerns for the Games, slated in Manila and three provincial sites, which is expected to cost the country around ₱800 million.

"The thesis set to finalize the national government has much to fulfilling the commitment that is why we are working together with the private sector so best as we can," said Puglisinan, who expressed confidence that the Philsea can raise more than ₱1 billion in sponsorship.

Under Philsea's marketing strategy, a major sponsorship amounting to ₱100 million will be classified as gold, ₱80 million silver and ₱50 million bronze, according to local marketing team head Bert Gatu.

The boomerang industry had already done its share in boosting the SEAG coffers after the staging of the SEA Games Cup at the Rizal memorials last week through the efforts of Cojuangco, who is also the wins and meets executive chair of the Philsea.

The Ben Gonzalez Foundation had likewise raised ₱100 million through pledges from the private sector recently to fund the training of the country's athletes who are tasked to retain the overall championship this time.

PAGDANGANAN

ABLAZA

Bata, Alex top 9-ball favorites

THE QUALIFYING round of the P1-million Philippine Open 9-ball championship last Saturday at the Bowling Inn billiard hall on Taft avenue, Manila.

The top-eight finishers in this event will join the eight seeded players, led by former world champion Efren "Bata" Reyes and reigning titlist Alex Pagulayan, in the finals on Feb. 23 - 27. It will be aired on IBC 13 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Also seeded in the finals are Francisco "Django" Bustamante, 2005 SEA Games double gold winner Lee Vann Corteza, 2000 All Japan Open champion Rubilen "Robin" Amit, 2004 Fujairah World 9-ball runner-up Ruslan "Blue-whale" Manalo, Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat and Leonardo "Bodong Dalisayan" Andres.

Registration is until tomorrow at the Corazon Cojuangco Gymnasium in Makati City.

All participants should present their license from the Games and Amusements Board.

Matches in the qualifying phase will be race to 7.

The tournament dubbed as "Best of the Best 40 Billiard Open" is organized by Atty. Delmundo Cruz and Mars Ramos and Power Sports Big Boss Ayaso " Fuerch" Dyogi. It is sponsored by Hyatt and Smart.

This year's champion receives P500,000 in prize money with P200,000 going to the second placer. Third and fourth spots will be worth P50,000 each. The fifth and sixth placers will get P30,000 each, the seventh and eighth will bag P20,000 and the ninth to 16 players will receive P12,500.

Pilipino legend and actor Eh- Jared Ace "Dancing" Panlilio who turned 70 on May 9 was held in 1992 at the Hyatt Regency Manila in Manila. Pesta capped Edmund "Pilay" Villanueva, 13-14, for the P200,000 championship prize.

Among the early movies in the qualifying phase are Dennis "Scripio" Orcollo, Antonio "Boboy" Lining, Gerald "Jigsaw" Abiz, Ramon Alacaraz "Mamito" Sibaza, Sonsky "Rapid Fire" Villanueva, Antonio "Si-ely" Gabica, Rudd "Johnny" Gallego, Rene "Sabanta" Del Rosario, Efren "Bata" Esteves, Romeo "Colombo" Alonzo, Jeffrey "Jeff Bata" De Leon, Bi-Jun "Golden Boy" Aguilar and Daniel Delacruz.

Tournament director is Rolly Montes. May last the tournament, contributor

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Agassi wins 13th straight SAP opener
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Welcoat-Montaña title rubber today

THERE was no doubt for Welcoat that the PBL Open Championship series will come down to a deuce-ole deal.

"We were very focused and we didn't want to give up because we already reached the far," said veteran guard Ryan Ty, whose clutch plays in the final minutes lifted the Paintmasters past the Montaña Jewels with a dramatic 89-77 frame early last Sunday.

"Even before the game, we were thinking that there will be a Game 3," added forward Ian Sajnani, whose 18-point performance fueled the Jewels' bid for their first ever 6-0 do.

And Welcoat coach Coley Garcia aims to bank on this momentum when his Paintmasters battle the Jewels for the title in the finale of their best-of-five series at 2:30 p.m. today in the Makati Coliseum.

"We've been given another chance to worry going to finish them off," noted Garcia.

Jewels coach Hubert Tatad, however, is hoping for a reversal of fortunes.

"We were always there but the breaks of the game weren't another in the end," said Tatad. "Hopefully, tomorrow's success is until the breaks favor us too."

Holding a 77-75 lead in the final minute of Game 4, the Jewels nearly bagged their first ever title since joining the league in 1998. But two turnovers and Ty's heroics spoiled the Jewels' celebration.

Sajnani thinks, though, that the latest breaking loss did not dampen the Jewels' spirits.

"Hindi po kami nanawalan ng pag-asa (We haven't lost hope)," he said. "I have high respect for my players kaya malakas po ang pagsasabi ko na di kami kayo ng (we are confident we still have a big chance)."

Unlike the Jewels, however, Garcia believes that he no longer needs to pump up his team's energy.

"Right now the team's morale is high and I'm sure we're going to have a good game," he said.

The Paintmasters are going for their sixth title in 10 finals.

Before Welcoat's second unit stepped up in Game 4, Anthony Washington, Chester Tolentino and Marvin Dedigamo have been carrying the Paintmasters through.

The Paintmasters have been using their edge in height and built to dominate the boards, 46-34.5.

Montaña has been leaning on the stellar performances of Most Valuable Player Jun Gabrador and Alex Compton, who averaged 15.5 points in the title series.

The Jewels have also limited their rivals to 77, compared to the Paintmasters' 85.8 average turnovers.

Welcoat took the series opener, 77-65, before Montaña claimed Games 2 (85-68) and Game 3 (77-67).

Jeannine M. Pace

ANTHONY Washington of Welcoat does a reverse dunk in Game 3.

Sparmates pick Manny over Erik

THEIR sparring took only three rounds Thursday, but BF super featherweight champion Israel "MagniFlex" Makkay earns our conviction that Manny Pacquiao would beat his fellow Mexican Erik Morales in their fight at the MGM Grand in Los Angeles on March 19.

And to think that before Pacquiao took on his friend and chief sparring partner he had gone through five rounds with Raymundo "Sugar" Gobrun.

"I see Morales but I think Manny will win. He is now faster and stronger," Makkay told Calibanon based Filipino Winthrill Campos, Tuesday.

The last time they sparred was years ago. Pacquiao was preparing for his super bantam title fight against Marco Antonio Barrera, whom he eventually stopped in the 11th round. Then, Vasquez could still remark Pacquiao's speed and punching power.

Now that Pacquiao has moved up to the flyweight division, Vasquez feels Pacquiao has gotten harder to hit and could take stronger punches as well.

During their sparring, Pacquiao once caused his arms, covered his head protective style, and he Vasquez deliver five powerful shots to his ribcage with hardly any effect.

"Manny is my friend but aside from that, I know he has what it takes to win against Morales."

"Manny will win, I don't know, probably by knockout. Morales is taller and bigger and that could be the difference, too," added Vasquez.

Against Beltran, Pacquiao saw almost unreachable. He pounded the Mexican almost at will and snapped only when Beltran's legs wobbled as a result of continuous rocks body.

"I have never experienced getting hit that hard not that strong but it is an honor fighting Manny because I learn a lot from him. It makes me a better boxer," said Beltran, who consoled with Vasquez's victory.

Pacquiao has now completed 44 rounds of sparring and said that he is feeling good.

Champions League starts tomorrow

THE PHILIPPINE Christian University Dolphins, the reigning National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) champions, have been seeded first in the Collegiate Champions League set to start tomorrow at the San Beda College gym.

The Dolphins are one of four NCAA teams represented in the 16-man cast, the others being University of Perpetual Help, Adamson and San Beda.

Defending champion San Sebastian University, seeded second, heads the University Athletic Association of the Philippines (UAAP) representation which includes Ateneo de Manila, University of the East and University of the Philippines.

UP took over the slot left by UAAP titlist La Salle which opted to take a much-needed break.

UPIS and Ateneo have been seeded third and fourth, respectively.

Completing the Metro Manila-based squads in the roster are University of Manila and Emilio Aguinaldo College.

Out to challenge the Big City's domination are teams from the South led by University of Visayas of Cebu.

The other provincial squads are University of San Jose-Recoletos, West Negros College, University of Cebu, University of Mindanao and University of Southern Philippines.

The USC Pilldcats won the right to represent Mindanao after beating Holy Cross of Davao in a three-game series held in Davao.

Ney Guzman, chair of the organizing committee, said the top three teams in the knockout competition will receive cash prizes for their respective sports development programs.

La Salle, UST start finals tiff

[illegible] (Rizal Memorial Coliseum)
1 (this w...PSC ex/Alvarez
2:30 p.m.—Santa Teresa vs La Salle

By Manuel R. Castillo

AUGUST Sta. Maria can't remember just how many titles he's won as volleyball coach of the Santa Teresa Tigresses.

What he knows is that playing for the Shakey's V-League title is as big as any league he's competed in—if not bigger.

"This is not only for the [V-League] title, but as an instrument to bring back the glory of the sport," Sta. Maria told the Inquirer yesterday, on the eve of Game 1 of their best-of-three series with favored La Salle.

"But unlike in a big season, why volleyball will become popular again," added Sta. Maria, who has been at the helm of the UST program for the last 23 years that earned him dozens of UAAP and Inter-Collegiate titles.

Sta. Maria couldn't have put it any better with the two glamorous collegiate powerhouses starting their duel at 2:30 p.m. at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

"We will play for the fans. We will go all out for them," said Sta. Maria, who declared his defending champion Tigresses as the underdogs. "We will be playing against a complete team, but we will give them a good fight."

Like his counterpart at La Salle, Ramil de Jesus, Sta. Maria refused to predict the outcome. But Santa Teresa will come into the game fresher than the Lady Archers, who had to go through a knockout game with Letran on Tuesday.

Letran and PSC, meanwhile, clash for the crowns in the 1:00 p.m. contest.

"They (Tigresses) are well-rested, and they have the advantage, if only for that," said De Jesus after a straight-sets victory over the Lady Knights on Tuesday. "We had little time to prepare for today."

UST sweeps the PSC Lady Legends in its semis series, and will be coming into the game with the benefit of scouring its opponents longer.

Setsuane Pimentel will still be Santa Teresa's main weapon, according to Sta. Maria. But he expects the others to step up to the challenge, especially Mary Jean Balse, Bubbie de Leon and Dixie Ge Ta Eang.

Balse, a recruit from the University of Mindanao's Tagum branch, won MVP honors in the first conference and Sta. Maria could be calling on the tall attacker if Pimentel runs into trouble.

Michelle and Mayette Caroline will again lead the Lady Archers.

La Salle and UST split their eliminations assignments and wound up with 11-3 slates going into the playoffs.

RP slots for Rivero, Go

ATHENS (Olympian Mary Antoinette Rivero and Tabombo Go triumphed last Sunday to earn national team slots in the Beijing GPI (Carlos Palanca Jr.) taekwondo championships at the Rizal Applied Studies.

General Gym's Rivero beat UP's Rael Ortega for the senior women's light-welter gold medal, while Sir Raven's Go top. pped Sta. Rita's Jose Emmanuel Eligasco to the senior men's flyweight finals.

Other winners also who prevailed in the senior division of the tourney organized by the Philippine Taekwondo Association and supported by Rexies, Mile and Philippine Sports Commission were heavyweight Manuel Rivero Jr., welterweight Alexander Briones, middleweight Dax Alberto Monk, flyweight Eunice Abara, flyweight Jiajar Catalan and heavyweight Marquetta Bonifacio.

Rivero of ELJO-Ki, Bonifacio (San Pablo Central) Gregorio, PAF's Briones outbought International Schools Inc. Ignacio, Nueva Ecija's Rhode topped UP's Daniel Tan, PUSO Taft's Abara whipped teammate Gwenlyn Asuncion, UP's Catalan whipped UE's Lilac Manguerdo and Ateneo's Bonifacio defeated Philippine Normal University's Darice Ringco.

INNOVA

Cavs' All-Stars sparkle

Bulls trip Mavericks; Spurs win minus Duncan

FORWARD Tyson Chandler of the Chicago Bulls screams after finishing a dunk with a reverse slam dunk against the Dallas Mavericks in Dallas, Texas. AP

CLEVELAND—Zydrunas Ilgauskas scored 23 points, fellow All-Star Lebron James flirted with his third triple-double in limited action and the Cleveland Cavaliers rolled to a 104-91 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Tuesday.

James had 10 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds in just 30 minutes. Ilgauskas, named an All-Star moments earlier in the day, shot 6-for-11 from the field and had six rebounds and three blocked shots.

"LeBron was passing well and 'Z' was taking it to the body strong," said Cavaliers coach Paul Silas. "Yeah, they played like All-Stars."

In other games, the Golden State Warriors topped the Orlando Magic 113-109; the Phoenix Suns edged the Sacramento Kings, 125-123; the San Antonio Spurs downed the Charlotte Bobcats, 104-95; the Milwaukee Bucks crushed the Boston Celtics, 121-97; the Memphis Grizzlies whipped the Minnesota Timberwolves, 108-96; The Chicago Bulls surprised the Dallas Mavericks, 108-97; the Denver Nuggets defeated the Utah Jazz, 97-87; and the Seattle SuperSonics ended the New Orleans Hornets, 104-91.

In Orlando, Florida, Jason Richardson scored 11 of his 32 points in the final 3:24, and the Golden State Warriors' maneuvers, 10-game road losing streak.

In Sacramento, California, Amare Stoudemire blocked a shot by Brad Miller with less than a second remaining that would have tied the game, and Phoenix beat Sacramento on a half-long rush-hop of the Suns' Jason's top two teams.

Steve Nash scored a season-high 30 points with 17 assists as the Suns snapped an eight-game losing streak in new arena to win for the eighth time in nine games. Nash has passed for 11 or more assists in each of his last seven games.

CHARLOTTE Bobcats big man Primoz Brezec (right) is fouled hard by San Antonio Spurs forward Ron Mercer during a in the first quarter of their game. AP

Chris Webber had 16 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists for his third triple-double this season and second in as many games—marking the first time in Sacramento franchise history a player has recorded back-to-back triple-doubles.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, not even the absence of Tim Duncan could slow San Antonio, which got a big lift from the return of Bruce Bowen to beat Charlotte.

With Duncan out for the first time that season and his opponent stable, Bowen marked his return to the starting lineup after a suspension with 15 points and eight rebounds to lead 22 Spurs assists.

Tony Parker had 20 points, Manu Ginobili had 12 and Bruce Bowen added 10 for the Spurs, who improved to an 8th-best 39-15.

In Milwaukee, Mike James scored a career-high 26 points, including eight 3-pointers, as Milwaukee defeated Boston.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Lawrence Wright had 16 points and 12 rebounds Tuesday leading six Memphis players to double figures in overcoming Minnesota.

In Dallas, Jason Terry had 26 points and 11 rebounds and Eddy Curry added 23 points, including several big buckets in the fourth quarter, in Chicago's rout Dallas.

The Bulls won for the 23rd time, snapping last season's total. This one ended a three-game losing streak and put them over .500 (23-22) in February for the first time since Michael Jordan's last season.

In Denver, Earl Boykins came off the bench to score 26 points, outscoring all five Utah starters. Carlos Boozer and Gerardo Anderson had 23 points for Denver.

Utah's starters combined for just 39 points.

In Seattle, Ray Allen scored 26 points and Vitaliy Rudinskovs added 10 points off the bench as Seattle downed New Orleans.

Allen played 36 minutes and shot 11-for-17. Rudinskovs made four 3-pointers. AP

Ginobili leads first-time relievers

NEW YORK—Argentine star Manu Ginobili of the San Antonio Spurs was among six players picked as NBA All-Stars for the first time when Commissioner David Stern announced on Tuesday.

Dwyane Wade of the Miami Heat, Gilbert Arenas and Antawn Jamison of the Washington Wizards, Amare Stoudemire of the Phoenix Suns, and Rashard Lewis of the Seattle SuperSonics also gained their first All-Star selections following by the NBA 20-head coaches.

Cleveland's LeBron James, chosen as an Eastern Conference starter last week, is a 0-time All-Star selection.

The fourth other reserves for the Feb. 26 game in Denver are Lithuanian native Zydrunas Ilgauskas of Cleveland and Ben Wallace of Detroit, Emeka Jacquine O'Neal of Indiana, and guard Paul Pierce of Boston.

Canada guard Steve Nash of Phoenix and Tim Allen of Seattle, and German forward Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas and Shaun Mahon of Phoenix were selected for the Western Conference team.

The selections of Ilgauskas, Gandhi, Nash, Nowitzki, Tim Duncan (US Virgin Islands) and Yao Ming (China) gives the 2005 All-Star game six international players.

Ginobili, a member of the Argentine team that won a gold medal at the Athens Olympics, is averaging 13.9 points, 4.4 rebounds and 4.0 assists while shooting nearly 50 percent for the Spurs, who lead the league's best record (38-15).

Arriving from last year's Eastern Conference champion Miami Heat, who had played in every All-Star game since 1994, and Orlando's Steve Francis, a three-time All-Star.

Also noteworthy for his absence was Sacramento center Brad Miller, who apparently fell victim to Western Conference coaches filling in their rosters with a surplus. Coaches were required to select two guards, two forwards, one center and two other players regardless of position, but could not vote for their own players.

The Kings also have three other players with

NOWITZKI GINOBILI O'NEAL PIERCE

11 combined previous All-Star appearances—Chris Webber, Peja Stojakovic and Mike Bibby—who were left off this year's team.

The East's starters are Philadelphia's Allen Iverson, Miami's Shaquille O'Neal, New Jersey's Vince Carter, Orlando's Grant Hill and Jamison.

Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers, Tracy McGrady and Yao of Houston, Kevin Garnett of Minnesota and Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas will start for the West.

The coaches are Gregg Popovich of the Spurs for the West, and Brian Grande of the Heat for the East. AP

SPORTSWATCH

Makati Sports Club launches tennis school

THE MAKATI Sports Club recently launched the Tennis Academy, a complete tennis development program aimed at providing the local professional tennis academies some game. The club's certified coaches will instruct students on the basic and fundamentals of tennis, and will help students improve their tennis skills. Interested parties may contact Coach A.C. Nevado for tots and Philando Mayor. Tennis registration offers free courses, awards, beginner, improver, intermediate and advanced tennis camps conducted on the appointed courts of the Club's Sports Pavilion and tennis courts. Registration is Fridays from noon to 9:00, and from Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Interested parties may call 897-8711 to 19 extensions 216 or 212.

URBL skaters refs' auditions

THE URBL (Philippines) Basketball League (URBL) is now accepting applications for referees and officials for the upcoming 2006 season. The URBL season is a 10-month season that will run from February to November. The league is open to all male and female applicants between 20 years of age. The applicant must be a college graduate with a minimum height of 5 feet. Applicants must have at least 2 years experience officiating basketball games. Those interested may submit their resumes at the URBL Office at 3rd floor Mayor's Day Complex, Makati. Interested parties may contact Mr. Carlos Padilla (09) or Mr. Ben Tolentino (09) at 7 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday at 7 p.m. for scheduling and interview. Promising applicants may forward their resumes by mail.

Torre nearly perfect in simul exhibition

GRANDMASTER Eugene Torre accomplished a near-perfect score of 32 wins against 4 straight draws and no losses in a simultaneous exhibition held at the Ayala Valley College gym in Malaybalay, Bukidnon, last Saturday. The 25-board exhibition marked Torre's first grandmaster-level encounter with members of the Kaisahan sa Malaybalay Chess Club in the city's Mayor's Day celebration. Bukidnon Governor Jose Maria Zubiri Jr. and Malaybalay City Mayor Jose Ma. Paolo Fortich also played Torre and succumbed to defeat.

Cockfighting heavyweights square off

THE DAVAO CITY Coliseum will host a thrilling derby tonight. Filipino Antonio and Jose Santiago Bede' Sanchez today will be the featured Gardens Association (GCA) 7-Cock Derby gala cockfighting extravaganza at the Davao Coliseum. Antonio and Santiago billed three sure-cock at last Sunday's qualifying round. Today's championship round will start at 8 p.m. Meanwhile, those who wish to join the GCA cockfighting derby in September must have their exclusively conceived and sabong-launched and on March 19 to 21. For inquiries, call 0918-28-19 and 0918-2369.

SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN Jaime Aguio (middle) and Michael Elliot, champion and 1st runner-up, respectively, in their division at the recent Pablo Tecson International Trophy are welcomed at the airport by (from left) Hanson Gold Association of the Philippines executive officer Jake Ayson, team captain Jun Galarion, director Sir Leon Roberto Santiago, Jaime's father Joe and Michael's father Cec.

Agassi wins 13th straight SAP opener

AGASSI AP

SAN JOSE, California—At what has become his personal tennis playground, 34-year-old Andre Agassi defeated Bobby Reynolds, 6-3, 6-4, Tuesday in the first round of the SAP Open.

The two-time defending champion has won his first-round match in all 13 appearances at this event. Reynolds is playing in his fifth career ATP level event.

In other matches, third-seeded Tommy Haas dispatched Gregory Carraz of France, 6-3, 7-6 (3), Vincent Spadea beat Frenchman Antony Dupuis, 5-7, 6-1, 6-2, seventh-seeded Jurgen Melzer of Austria survived with a 6-2, 7-5 win over qualifier Glenn Weiner of the United States. Melzer sent 82 percent of his first-serve points in taking the first meeting between the players. Czech qualifier Jaroslav Levinsky defeated Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany for the fourth straight time.

"It took a while to sort of get comfortable," Agassi said. "Ultimately I started getting a sense of my court positions. I'm hoping I can use a nice serve to my advantage and that's a factor to be disciplined with my shot selection and keep others to be aggressive at the right time."

Agassi played his first match since announcing he was returning to the U.S Davis Cup team that will play Croatia in early March.

The surprised circumstances would have me being able to play," Agassi said. "I had the mind-set you play everything to Davis Cup or you don't. I want to be a part of it, but I can't play every time."

Davis coach Patrick McEnroe entered with Agassi and conferred with his coach's plan where he could. Agassi called each player to make sure he was assured and involved. AP

Original Russian tennis babe stalked

MIAMI BEACH, Florida—A luxurious man obsessed with tennis star Anna Kournikova's mom asked across the street for help in search of her home and got caught lounging in the buff at her neighbor's pool, police said.

Police said William Lepeska, a convicted felon, was found in the unwanted fan, 60 from the house three doors down from Kournikova's $1 million home. He faced a court appearance Friday.

Lepeska, 46, who does not have Kournikova on his team, was charged with trespassing and burglary, as well as exposing himself in the presence of a child, after the neighbor's 3 year-old daughter saw him lying naked on a lawn chair by the pool.

Lepeska, allegedly told police that he was in love with the tennis star and desperate to meet her.

Angela Robertson, a Miami-Dade public defender representing Lepeska, did not immediately return a phone message Tuesday.

Ivy Malmberg, the team player's publicist, said in a statement that the tennis "has caused stress to be very concerned and touched for her safety."

Lepeska asked police for some months searching for Kournikova's address on the Internet. He sent her numerous letters and e-mails, and told police he believed Kournikova had left a door unlocked and had on clothing for him.

Miami-Dade County Court Judge Gerald Klein issued a restraining order against Lepeska on Friday. Lepeska is currently being held in the county jail on a $26,000 bail.

Kournikova is retired, Davidenko and Steve Clayden, did not immediately return phone messages Tuesday.

The Russian star was the first player to sign a contract with a new label by rebound Mario Hampton. AP

SUPER CHAMPS How England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (left) and Super Bowl MVP Deion Branch parade through the streets of Boston to celebrate their conquest of the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl XXXIX. The title was the team's third in four years. AP

#DontMissOne

De Mesa, guest top Bill Shaw Memorial

TEAMMATES Gerard Custodio (left) and JR Tenpinco confer during the Konica Manila National Pro-Am at Riviera's Langer in Silang, Cavite. JAY ISRAEL

Reigning titlists, Pucay-Roy pace Konica Pro-Am

By Myoung B. Castillo

SILANG, Cavite—The defending champion Gerard Custodio-JR Tenpinco tandem fired a one-over 72 over a wind-swept Langer course yesterday for a share of the lead after 18 holes of the Konica Manila National Pro-Am.

Custodio-Tenpinco came back strong on the back side, starting out with a 33 highlighted by three straight birdies from the 10th, to take a piece of the lead with the Mars Pucay-Jose Roy partnership.

Pucay and Roy also had a 36 on the front nine but finished four times coming home to keep Custodio and Tenpinco company at the top, nine strokes up on Solomon Gruz and tournie Mendoza.

The team of Gruz and the flamboyant Mendoza took advantage of the relative morning calm to assemble a 73 in the tournament sponsored by Konica Manila business technologies and the U-Bix Corp.

"JR and I just want to have fun out there," said the 23-year old Custodio.

Rookie Jay Ying and Lee Seung-hoon stood fourth after a 74 even as Bert Bustarra and Silvano Santander, the runners-up last year, managed a 75 on their home course for solo fifth.

Sheldon Oliver and Rabovitcha Rosa shot a 76, Jay Pagsuyoin and Bobby Rigo turned in a 77 like Lito and Gilbert Nabor, while Tee Boon Ho and Jun-Jun Lee and Peter Garcia and John Eric Abalos assembled identical 78s to round out the top 10.

Meanwhile, Oscar Colmenar, an obscure coaching pro, scored his first ace on the 156-yard 17th hole with a pitching wedge.

The unknown adds to three home-run Toyota El Lexi staked for a hole-in-one, though, because it was designated to be worn on the No. 4.

"It's my first hole-in-one in 20 years," said Colmenar in Filipino. "It's okay if I don't bring home the prize car."

Instead, Colmenar will receive a round trip ticket to the United States from Manila Airlines, P10,000 each and P75,000 worth of food and another P5,000 worth of equipment and golf accessories from the Konica pro shop.

Other hardware are Fuso, Xpress, Brother Office Center, Olympics, Planet Network, Service Master, Yeomans, Sharp Manila, Guppy's Restaurant, Cafe Agapantanay, Dos Orabs, Bagong Mariano, Owl Office Express, PSC, Bistro Grill and Rustan's Group.

De Mesa, guest top Bill Shaw Memorial

ANTONIO de Mesa and his guest partner, Rodolfo Manuel, combined for a two-day score of 136 to emerge as overall champion in the recent 16th Bill Shaw Memorial Golf Tournament at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club in Mandaluyong City.

De Mesa and Manuel carded an aggregate net of 136 in the two-day event and assembled a 42 in scramble play the next day to shoot up the 200 teams which took part in the 36-hole tourney presented by Samsung Electronics Phils., Northwest Airlines and Globe Telecom.

Gary Go and Tomas Wong were the low gross pairs for the second straight year. They shot a 152 in aggregate and 73 in scramble play for a 225 total.

More than P5 million in prizes were given away, the bulk of which went On Scale to cash prizes put up by Northwest Airlines, Toyota Balintawak, Toyota Motor Philippines, Mitsubishi Motors Phils. Corp. and Union Motors Phils., Kuo Pharm, Kyowa Hakko Inc. and Asian Therapeutics Inc.—(SHM SIBC Product).

Major sponsors were Philippine Airlines, Peregrine, the First Gentlemen Foundation, Goldcrest Phils. and Ian Miguel Corp. Inquirer, Sta. Elena Properties, Splash Corp., Digest and PCSO were premier sponsors.

Fernandina Batiza, Discovery Suites, GSEA Distributors, Smarts Gilberto Chua's, Equitable PCI Bank, HARAVEST, Cardinal Santi, Mc Donalds Phils, Waterfront Hotel and Casino, eGOLO, Mc Home Depot, Lowyaney Mfrg. (Orbit), E.G. Stalino Mfg. Corp., Kobesia, Driftwood, Synergy Med Clinic, Prime Medical, Cool Q Luxe, Arrow Shirts, Fort Bonifacio Resort and Hotel, Fortune Tobacco, China Bank, KIG by Custom Clubmakers, Sykes Solution, Just-G, Golfies, Metro Ironist, Shangri-La Plaza, Johnnie Walker, Absolut Mineral Water, Cirrolium, Harveshaw Golfwear, Red Ribbon and Sykes Solution.

Club president Ben Abalos and sports and games chair Pablo Sison, who also headed the organizing committee, handed out the tournament and raffle awards.

Winning the division titles were Isaac Go-Louis Chua in Group C, Willy Ho Kim Phang in Group B, Augusto de Jesus-Ken Gerardo in Group D and Reinaldo Santos Jr.-Efren Pilarca in the seniors category. The Undrew tandem of Mon Dizon and Jake Jocson ruled the sponsors category.

The results:

Division (minus to Most Points) Score 134-D-TH: **Lee Brice** Tony De Ocampo Wong 133-74-572; **Group** C team Go Louis Chua 136-63-146; Uniarto Santos-Jose Magsaysay 138-66-157; Ramon Ng 139-68-Pano Co-O 155; **Group B** Willy Ho Kim Phang 134-62-142; Antonio Rempel Dizon Tiongson 134-70-148; Antonio Yang Ginebra Cruz 136-64-150; **Group D** Augusto de Jesus-Ken Gerardo 128-60-135; Edgar Salvador-Jose Sengson 139-65-138; Francisco Lhuillier-Jose Lim 140-66-155; **Seniors** Reinaldo Santos-Efren Pilarca 134-60-146; Cesario Gonzales-Jovino Lacson 136-62-146; Ernesto Gonzales-Jose Magsaysay 136-70-Nacino Angat 140-66-154; Federico Kanapi-Noel Perez 140-66; **Ace Youngers** Emily Yenson 146-66.

Moya triumphs

RUDOLPH MOYA—Top seed Carlos Moya enjoyed a straight-set win over qualifier Peter Luczak in the first round of the $560,000 Brasil Open Aero Open on Tuesday.

Moya, who won the first of his 15 ATP singles titles at the same tournament 10 years ago, beat the Australian, 6-3, 7-6, to earn a second-round match against Argentine Juan Monaco. Joan Ignacio Chela lost, 7-5, 6-1, to Marc Lopez. Reuters

Championing the Champions League

SPECTATOR

J.S. Henderson

TRUST admit we have a lot, if not an overweight, of basketball tournaments in this country. Whenever you look, you are sure that is going on.

But that is not really surprising. We are a basketball country. That is ironic, but then, the Filipino race has always been a paradox in the world.

We can shoot for the game of basketball but still, basketball has been our game since the Americans—Seamanco to be precise...brought the game to the country in 1900.

Football is the game in Asia, which is but right because football suits best the smaller people.

We don't give a damn to fact, though. Basketball will always be our first love since Carlos Loyzaga gave the Philippines the world Championship (in 1954) in Rio de Janeiro. I guess?). It is said that first love never dies.

So now, exciting tomorrow, we will have the Fiba Collegiate Champions League. This one is good because it will feature the stars of college basketball, which means they are the prime source of the country's future superstars of the game.

That has been an oft-repeated line but it needs to be said here again if only to emphasize the true character of the Champions League.

The list of schools taking part is impressive.

For one, the participants are the Top 10 schools of college basketball not only in Luzon but also in the Visayas and Mindanao, a testament to the Champions League's tournament-to-quality performances.

For another, the Champions League has laid down a one-time format whereby any team that gets beaten during the two-week tournament gets automatically knocked out of the competition, ensuring for a front-loaded of competition from start to finish.

Just making a look at the roster of schools entered makes me feel like thrilled to the bones...reigning champion the Ateneo University, Champions League inaugural twice-ner University of the East, defending MCM champion Philippine Christian University, University of Perpetual Help, Letran, San Beda, University of the Philippines, NCR champions University of Manila and Emilio Aguinaldo College and Ateneo, From the Visayas and Mindanao are powerhouse teams University of Visayas, San Jose Recoletos and University of Southern Philippines, and the champions of Davao and Baguio.

This looks to me like "The Contender or Off Carroll"—all are first draws. One toss, you die. The first to blink fails.

I am saddened, though, by the withdrawal of La Salle, the reigning UAAP champion. It begged off at the last minute, citing a "crowded schedule for the year."

Still, I foresee a resounding success for this tournament, a knockout Joe Lipa-who, in my book, is the undisputed Mastermind of the game.

Yet at the San Beda Diwalwalid and farmers (Kalipunan) game is in Manila schedule (five days), the Champions League has been playing three scheduled in Cebu.

The beauty of this tournament, which will be aired over ABS-C, is that it will give P500,000 to the champion, P250,000 to the runner-up and P100,000 to the third placer.

That is a whopping incentive for any participants. The money will be earmarked for the winning schools' sports development program. Thus, it can be said that the Champions League will hit two birds with one stone: One, discover the future stars of the land; and two, continue to search for new ones in the money prizes will see to that.

Yes, we are basketball mania mixed up and tight, but I won't mind the addition of another if it's the Champions League we're talking about.

Quality is always welcomed.

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Carole S. Martinez

Mirant revives plan to go public

By Abigail L. Ho

MANILA lures well: the Philippine Stock Exchange has been performing lately, Mirant Philippines Corp. is bent on going public within this year.

Quoting Marvin Feliez, president and chief executive of Mirant Philippines, parent firm Mirant Corp., Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said the country's biggest independent power producer was seriously considering conducting an initial public offering some time soon.

"During Marvin Feliez's course, we call it Mahatma[n], last week, she reiterated her desire [for Mirant] to go public. She said she would consider it seriously. It's only a matter of time, but [nevertheless] is to have it within the year," he said.

The power czar had earlier said it would list a 10-percent stake on the local bourse.

Perez said that with the stock exchange performing "exceptionally well" as of late, it would come as no surprise if more energy firms would consider doing their shares soon.

"This may be as good a time as any for energy companies to float their shares[,] as the Philippine Stock Exchange," he said.

The recent listing of Meralco additional shares by local large-scale coal producer Semirara Mining Corp., he said, was seen to lower the interest of firms engaged in oil exploration, geothermal energy and power to do their own initial public offerings.

The PSE has been trying to woo oil major Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and power firms Mirant Philippines and First Generation Holdings Corp. to go public.

While all of these had earlier expressed their intention to go public, particularly in the next leg of Manila's late, the bourse's performance of the local bourse in the past had hindered them from doing so.

Perez expressed confidence that the recent bullish behavior of the market would encourage them to finally list their shares.

While nothing for other energy-related firms to make their move, however, he said the government could also take the lead through an IPO by Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp.

PNOC-EDC is in the process of selecting a financial adviser that will help facilitate its privatization effort.

PNOC-EDC will be floating 60-percent of its equity, or 600 million shares, to the public.

The firm will be following the privatization model of Petron, which is

SMC to buy Malaysian ice cream company

By Elizabeth G. Saruben

SMB Miguel Corp., Southeast Asia's biggest food and beverage conglomerate, said it was buying 70-4 percent of a Malaysian ice cream company for roughly $5 million or P271 million.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, San Miguel said it had agreed to acquire the holdings of Hue Fortune Inc. and BBQ Ventures S [sic] in King's Creameries Pte. Ltd.

Malaysian Dairy Industries Pri-vate Ltd. (MDI), a Singapore-based dairy manufacturer, owns the remaining 25.62 percent in King's Creameries.

The Malaysian company is touted to among the top four ice cream players in Malaysia and Singapore. Its products range from bulk or tub foods and single-serve novelties. Its major brands include King's, Dairy Best and Hi-Ice.

The company also produces other ice cream brands under toll arrangements.

The acquisition is part of San Miguel's regional expansion strategy to boost its business and product portfolio across the Asia-Pacific region.

The acquisition would also give San Miguel a strong position in the region's growing dairy industry and provide immediate entry into the Malaysian and Singaporean ice cream markets.

San Miguel is studying the possibility of ice cream production in the region after it release last year its Magnolia ice cream brand, one of the most recognizable and enduring brands in the Philippines.

In the 1960s, Hotel 6 A. of Switzerland and San Miguel formed a joint venture company dubbed Hotel Philippines Inc. San Miguel later sold its 40-percent stake in the joint venture to Hotel 6 A., but retained ownership of the Magnolia brand. Inside the term of the site to Hotel 6 A. was a non-compete clause which prevented SMC from entering into the ice cream business for five years. The expired in 2000.

"The option and opportunity for San Miguel to reenter the market is open, now the matter of consumers. Magnolia ice cream sees 60 the market. People have always known Magnolia as a quality brand of ice cream. Actually to Orbrand is a strong because it is part of our heritage," SMC chief Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. had said.

China firm looks into Benguet, Zambales mine sites

THE METALLURGICAL and Construction Group of China (MCC) said it was signed a memorandum of agreement with local mining firms Benguet Corp. and Eramen Minerals Inc. for the conduct of a due diligence study on the prospective nickel properties in Zambales.

In a statement, the Philippine Chamber of Mines said the four nickel properties [of] the subsidiaries of Chinese and Japanese groups due in their 1-2 years[-]stated to US$ [illegible] nickel laterite grading.

With the MOA between MCC and the two local mining firms in place, the two Zambales properties could possibly be explored and developed using the technical cooperation and financial support of the state-owned Chinese firm.

The exploration and development of the Benguet and Zambales properties could entail a huge amount of capital, something that the Chinese state firm could help provide.

Around $800 million to $1 billion is required to construct a nickel processing plant with a capacity to produce between 30,000 tons and 50,000 tons of nickel ore, at the site.

MCC could later make the crude nickel ore into nickel processing plant possible.

As China's economy continues to grow, its expanding industry is expected to have a strong impact on the mineral sector," the Chamber of Mines said.

The MCC-Benguet-Eramen MOA came as a result of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that the country through the Department of Trade and Industry and of Environment and Natural Resources signed with the China Minmetals Corporation and China Metallurgical Construction Group Corp. in [illegible].

Under the MOU [illegible] to study the steel Hang Chengfang, committed to infuse $300 million into various Philippine mining projects.

The MOU was signed during the Chinese of Minister Jose Philippine mining conference in China last month.

Abigail L. Ho

No such thing as a free launch

BREAKTIME

Conrado E. Bunal III

IT is high time that we, as a people, receive cues and for all whether we very over "burong" goes well with brown shoes.

I think it is an issue of...how shall I put it...well, iconoclastic not-cool significance.

For sure, "burong" on brown shoes must be worth the attention of our beloved senators, who each get more than P200 million in pork funds our tax money every year.

That's only the money that the government forcibly takes away from us but is earned by every month.

Another issue is, of course, the freshness of our public officials by anything that's supposedly "new," because in the real world, there's no such thing as a free lunch.

In the ICT business—a buzzword of this current administration, together with "call center" and "natural corridor,"—people wonder what happened to some $86 or so easily computers.

Not too long ago, you see, when the GTE was still under Ramon Sio…cuy, Sio, Mr. Ramon, this current administration distributed computers to public schools.

The money for the computers did not come from our tax coffers. They were financed by a grant from the Japanese government. So no sympathy for what, only three years.

From what I gathered, those computers are still not running. Well, they did not have the software to make them run, that's why.

Usually, if you buy a computer, it comes loaded with the programs. This time unbeknownst to bought it, would it ever occur to by buying only the hardware.

Based on the story in the ICT scene, this current administration seemed to use the operating system called "Linux."

The software, supposedly, would be "free." This new administration wouldn't pay for it, not even with a cross-eyed glance of an tax payers.

It turned out that this government had to spend a lot more money to make the computers work using the so-called "free" software. Result? The computers are having lots bugs, operating more quirky, in computerese, than there's no such thing as a free launch!

EVERY in Europe, governments outlook that decided to switch to "Linux," thereby dropping "Windows," are rethinking their move.

It's because they found out that they would also spend money by using Linux, one way or another, and it would cost so much more than, say, staying with "Windows."

To make the "free" operating system use other programs, you have to use software that you can only buy from—what else—Linux.

That's what I call, partner, I'm visiting this website called "Zone-H," which I stumbled at http://www.zone-h.org.

It's where computer hackers gloat about their exploits in cyberspace. Hackers are those whose idea of fun is getting into your parent…no, your computers.

According to the Zone-H website, 39.2 percent of the attacks were against Windows, while an amazing 46 percent were against Linux.

And—get this—even government institutions were not spared. Three local websites were hacked.

One of them—would you believe—was the National Computer Center. Another was the Department of Science and Technology.

Another famous, enjoyable, beautiful and envied-urinating website, which Zone H claimed was hacked, was the DSWD site.

Maybe the hackers just wanted to correct the wrong grammar in the sentence, but I really can't say.

FOR the life of me, I cannot understand why DAP, the broadline publishing College Assistance Plan, the country's biggest education plan company, is borrowing P300 million.

The cost of borrowing obviously not exactly "free." To find, if lists point up, thanks mainly to the recent downgrading of our credit rating.

After all, DAP technically does not need the money. It has more than P6 billion in its trust fund/investment funds.

That about one score DAP's obligations to its existing plan holders over the next 19 years as they avail themselves of the scholarship under the plans.

I'm sure DAP has that kind of funding. I think. It is a "trust fund," kept in custody in some banks. Not all of those will be.

You may get one or two to be for you, but not all.

And DAP itself says that this trust fund will grow to P20 billion in 15 years. This is even a conservative estimate.

As a rule of thumb, investments double every five years, and it's not even an aggressive investment strategy. I mean, you don't even have to put money in stocks like SM. Or Ropinson Bonds!

You just put money pretty to Thrift, not even risk and bonds. There are precisely where the DAP trust fund put its money in.

In 10 years, that P6 billion can become P12 billion. In other words, DAP does not need the $300 million loan. The company is just borrowing it to please the SEC. And not even to piss holders! Just the SEC!

HOW so, upon former SEC chair Lilia Bautista's orders, DAP was told to raise bil- lions upon billions of funding, apparently due to this thing called AFS.

That's the "actuarial reserve liability," which is the "deficiency," according to the SEC, in the trust fund of DAP.

The AFS, unfortunately, was invented for life insurance companies, which are never sure of when or where their clients are going to die, or they may all die at the same time, such as during a terrorist attack or a conglomerated beating.

The SEC wanted to apply the AFS on DAP even if DAP can actually predict quite well just when its plan holders will use their educational plans.

I mean, really a one-year old beneficiary of DAP plan cannot all of a sudden just go in college.

Thinking that nobody would ever make use of its scheme to run DAP to the ground, the SEC imposed the AFS on DAP, which already put up several billions, and which is now trying to raise more by loan raising the $300 million. All for the SEC!

A COUPLE of senators, meanwhile, are busy with a disinformation or misinformation or whatever campaign, trying to discredit GSIS saying that it is bankrupt.

So…it is not bankrupt. GSIS is only low on cash—I said "cash," as in ready money, and not net worth—particularly after the issue of the SEC.

For one, the SEC slapped GSIS from doing business. For another, the SEC did not want GSIS to tap its trust fund to pay for the validity of its subclass, absolutely not only what the trust fund is all about. I mean, you pay him it when the need arises.

Sen. Mar Roxas even said that the sale put out by GSIS to defend itself against the attacks from Senna himself, was just a waste of money).

I wonder if GSIS would have put out the ads, and worded its money, if Roxas did not make the issue of the attack against the company. Just wondering, hmm?

Anyway, there is no end to the business secret as whether Roxas has some marching orders from Mar Roxas. Nobody knows.

But it is widely known in business that a group from New York wanted to take over GSIS' investment arm.

Even before the SEC imposed the AFS on GSIS a ranking SEC official already called up GSIS to say that a private knight would bail out the company, which was of course the New York group.

HOW value on, "helped" the SEC formulate the AFS, for companies like DAP but this lobby group called Agile, which is funded by the ING-AIG.

Agile consultants even held office at the SEC.

And one cannot help but wonder about the role of the Palmer Scott Schools and DAP affair.

The late former President Brodado Macapagal, father of Glorianna, was the chair emeritus of DAP from the bonfire of Emmanuel in the DAP beneficiaries' issue time.

All of a sudden, just when this Internet 14 (Palmer Scott) was in the picture, Glorianna's brothers resigned from the DAP board.

One wonders if the New York offensive had the blessings of the Palmer. Why would the SEC not care for the ability of the AFS?

Look, the AFS was set by 46 percent, as against the actual payments made by DAP for the plan holders. That 46 percent means more than P1 billion.

In other words, according to the SEC-inspired, Agile-formulated AFS, DAP should put up "reserves" for something it did not have to do. How stupid is that?

I am sure that anyone inquiry should ask instead why the SEC forced DAP to put up reserves, based on AFS which was already proven to be awfully wrong.

If the senate can get to the bottom of it, I am sure DAP will not need the $300 million loan.

DOF wants professionals audited

By Michelle V. Rarea

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance wants professionals—such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants—authorized to "periodic tax auditing" so that government can collect more taxes from them.

Predictor auditing refers to the function of Internal Revenue's use of industry income benchmarks—such as those for clinicians to estimate an individual's tax liabilities.

The BIR is empowered by the Bureau of Internal Revenue Code to conduct predictive auditing on fixed-to-tax income, or those whose accuracy of tax payment is difficult to determine.

Professionals are considered hard-to-tax because their taxes are not withheld by a company, unlike taxes of salaried workers or those with fixed income.

The suggestion to do predictive auditing on the latter came after a BIR study showed a high level of tax delinquency among doctors from leading hospitals in Metro Manila.

The study revealed that many doctors do not regularly issue receipts, and that some of them do not pay taxes at all.

But this means, the BIR said it must set its conduct a lifestyle check on doctors to determine the value of their assets and net worth, and predict the level of their tax liabilities.

But the DOF recommended that the BIR also tighten its watch over other professionals, such as lawyers, accountants and other high-earning self-employed individuals.

The BIR has committed to collect P648.4 billion in taxes this year, 10 percent more than its 2004 collections, to help meet the national government's target of reducing the budget deficit to below P130 billion.

Stock sale to hasten SMC expansion moves

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to sell the government's stake in San Miguel Corp. gives Southeast Asia's largest brewer a green wire to pursue its global ambitions, analysts say.

Ms Arroyo's announcement recently came on the heels of a Supreme Court ruling in favor of the government—a divested 27-percent block of company shares which the state had sequestered in 1987.

The verdict had to see a 17-year-old court battle over one of the Philippines's largest companies.

Together with state pension funds, the government has a holding of 33.9 percent—27 percent outright, while the Government Service Insurance System owns 6.6 percent, and the Social Security System 5.3 percent.

An additional 26 percent block, controlled by San Miguel's chairman Andres Soriano, is still being contested in the courts by the government.

While the government is now free to sell its directly held 27 percent stake, it is uncertain what the two pension funds will do with their combined 11.9 percent.

While pressure from any sale of the 27 percent share block would tip its stock coffers, it would also trigger a revamp of San Miguel's 15-member board, where government representatives predominate, and ensure the government's effective veto powers on corporate strategy.

Ms Arroyo's decision comes amid an aggressive expansion program by the company, led by its hard-charging chairman and political kingmaker, dubbed the "Pan Man" for his acquisitive bent.

The company has refused to comment on Ms Arroyo's announcement.

Analysts expect more legal challenges to the sale of the shares block, which is estimated to be worth P90 billion ($1.6 billion). But they said it should not derail the broadly supportive manner with the Arroyo's allies, as well as her opponents, in the legislature.

"The sale should push through, but there is still a process," said Emil Avendaño, dean of the school of economics of the University of Asia and the Pacific.

The shares were obtained by President Ferdinand Marcos during the government has alleged that the disputed 27 percent stake was acquired through the illegal use of levies imposed on coconut products in the 1970s.

From an investor's standpoint, "it would be positive," he said, citing previous government promises of upgrading political considerations ahead of local elections.

While San Miguel's core business is brewing, it is also into agribusiness, food manufacturing, packaging, and non-alcoholic beverages.

The government's moves come amid San Miguel's 1.79 billion Australian-dollar ($1.37 billion) takeover bidder for Australian dairy giant Goodman Fielder Ltd.

Loans would finance the Goodfellows bid for National Foods, Australia's biggest dairy company.

San Miguel has also announced a number of acquisitions and projects in the Asia-Pacific region in the past several months, the latest of which was the acquisition of a 76.08-percent stake in Singapore-based ice cream outfit King Germany Pte Ltd.

The Supreme Court ruling last year, underscoring enabling the planned sale of the 27 percent San Miguel share block, also meant that the company, whose cash flow has been weakened by the overseas expansions, could finally make use of its shares to raise funds.

The court letter rules on the 27 percent share block had previously prevented San Miguel from disposing the value of the shares, preventing the use of the shares for separate capital-raising activities.

Now that the legal cudes has been lifted, San Miguel has said in a statement that it may launch a rights offer of one for every 10 shares held by shareholders, or 10 percent of the outstanding capital stock of the company.

DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Quality and Holdings Corp. accepted the resignation of director Gerard Ortiz, who now resides in Canada.

ATLAS Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 5 at 9 a.m. at the Grand Ballroom, Hotel Inter-Continental Manila, Ayala Center, Makati City.

SAN Miguel Corp. disclosed that fund SEC 13 million for the 76.20-percent equity in King's Confectionery Pte Ltd. ...Complete on Pg. PD1-Ro. 4/4/05

Commercial bank lending seen to grow by 12%

By Doris C. Dumlao

DUMEUNDO

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas expects lending by commercial banks to grow by 12 percent this year.

The expected rate of growth is much higher than the 5.6-percent expansion posted by the industry as of November last year.

In an interview, BSP Assistant Governor Diwa Guinigundo said the projected loan growth for that year was consistent with expectations that investment spending would play a more significant role in boosting economic growth.

He said this was in line with the projected 5.6 percent inflation range and a gross domestic product growth target of 5.5 to 6.5 percent this year.

"It also assumes that growth will be driven by more credit-to-tender sectors," Guinigundo said.

Based on the BSP's latest data, commercial banks' outstanding loans as of November grew to P1.246 billion from year-ago level.

Domestic liquidity or m3 is used to estimate the entire supply of money in an economy. It includes money in circulation, demand deposits, money market funds and short-term repurchase agreements.

The BSP said it has continued its government in the level of liquidity suggested positive prospects for real sector activity in the months ahead.

The BSP vowed to maintain a "supportive" environment for the real economy and keep a close eye on monetary and price conditions in the near term.

Guinigundo said if growth would be driven more by investments than consumption, this would feed a greater demand by banks especially from credit-intensive sectors like manufacturing and services.

The manufacturing sector continues to account for the largest contribution to the total loan expansion. The sector accounts for about 35 percent of the country's industrial output and about a quarter of the domestic economy.

Aside from manufacturing, bank lending in the country is driven by demand from agriculture, fisheries and forestry; wholesale and retail trade; electricity, gas and water; and, community, social and personal services.

However, demand for loans remained sluggish in the financial sector, real estate and business services, construction, transportation, storage and communication, and mining and quarrying.

To encourage loan expansion, the Monetary Board has maintained the BSP's overnight lending/repurchase rate/borrowing rate at 6.75 percent and the overnight lending or repurchase rate at 9 percent, the same levels kept since July last year.

EPCIBank bags ₱3.8-B trade financing facility

By Doris C. Dumlao

EQUITABLE PCI Bank, the country's third biggest bank, has entered into a 50-million-euro (P3.8 billion) trade financing deal with German bank Norddeutsche Landesbank Girozentrale (NordLB).

The agreement with NordLB will give EPCIBank access to long-term financing with insurance cover from export credit agencies for equipment from developed countries in South America and the European Union.

The facility will cater to local companies in need of long-term finance for the importation of capital goods from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-member countries.

EPCIBank president and CEO Peter J. Bunzenreiter said: "We expect this facility to be of great assistance to the business sector. It is part of our program to assist enterprises and promote the growth and development of industries. They are the sources why we continue to build up our export base."

Heinz-Werner Frings, general manager of NordLB Singapore, said: "EPCIBank is the best Philippine bank to work with when it comes to conventional trade transactions because of its outstanding reputation in the international market, its dedicated team unmatched by local competition, and the quality of its lending portfolio."

Aristotle Villarosa, EPCIBank executive vice president, said the bank continued to seek ways to provide enterprises access to foreign credit resources, which could be more cost-effective than domestic loans.

"This makes it possible for importers to develop their production capabilities with foreign technology and to increase the volume and profitability of their business," Villarosa said.

EPCIBank, with assets of P306 billion, claims to be the only domestic bank with a dedicated team in structured finance that is able to directly access long-term project funding from major export credit agencies worldwide.

COAL-TO-LIQUID FUEL CONVERSION

President Macapagal-Arroyo looks on as Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya and Headwaters Technology Innovation Group CEO and president Craig Nicholas (at left) exchange a memorandum of understanding governing a coal-to-liquid fuel project. The signing of the deal, held in Malacañang, was also witnessed by (standing from left) Philippine representative to the ADB Marita N. Jimenez; Energy Secretary Vince Perez, and Rye Bersin, COO-DIVITAL

PSALM turns over Talomo plant to Hedcor

THE POWER Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) recently turned over the 3.3-megawatt Talomo hydro plant in Davao to Hydro Electric Development Corp. (Hedcor).

The Talomo complex is the first power generation facility to be privatized by the PSALM, in line with its mandate under Republic Act No. 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA).

In a bidding in March last year, Hedcor, a wholly owned subsidiary of Aboitiz Equity Ventures (AEV), won the bid for the hydropower facility with an offer of ₱1.37 million for the plant.

PSALM also turned over to United States-based lawyer Ramon Constantino the 1.8-MW Bakun plant in Cagayan de Oro.

Constantino won the bidding for the Bakun power plant last June 23 with an offer of ₱460,000.

During the turnover ceremonies, the heirs assured Malacañang Palace that the Talomo plant would be able to generate more electricity after the installation of more efficient turbines.

Hedcor president and chief executive Ernesto Aboitiz said in an interview after the ceremonies that the Talomo plant would be able to generate more electricity after the installation of more efficient turbines.

Provided, however, Constantino's representatives expressed the same intent for the Bakun plant.

"In a private entity, our target is to increase the generating capacity of the plant," Aboitiz said. "More generated power means more revenue for the local government of Bukidnon, as a private corporation, we are now subject to taxes." Abigail L. Bo-

CAP selling trust fund assets worth P700M

By Elizabeth L. Saavedra

PRUDENTIAL guarantee Plan (Philippines Inc. (CAP) is selling some of its trust fund assets to raise P500-P700 million in funds that will be used to pay insurance claims of policyholders by March.

CAP first vice president Bobby Cabe offered a private partnership that CAP was required to settle some P700-P800 million worth of insurance fees. The total requirement for the second semester or by October to March was estimated to reach P1.2 billion. Of the amount, CAP has already paid some P400 million.

Cabe said the company was in talks with possible investors for the sale of shares in 10 Estate Management Inc. and System Technology Inc. corporations worth P1 billion to be transferred to CAP in exchange for shares in the proceed company.

Sensa, through Green Square Properties and Great Circle Properties and Resources, is proposing to sales title to CAP shares worth P6 billion and up for them by allotting parcels of land in Baler town in the eastern province of Aurora near Dingalan Bay. Cabe also said CAP was in talks with the Rosas Group and the Fil-Invest Group for the acquisition of a 51-percent stake in the company.

CAP is also in talks with a US special fund, Firm American Investments Llc., for a $300-million loan. The first tranche or roughly $80 million may be drawn in the next 60 days. CAP is negotiating to convert the loan into shares of the company. Asked whether these moves—which may mean ceding control to new investors—are acceptable to shareholders, Cabe quoted CAP president Enrique Schroeder as saying that "what is important at this point is for CAP's name to stay in the country."

CAP is the pioneer in providing education plans in the country. Cabe admitted that CAP had a "cash flow problem" but added that this was already being addressed by the company.

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5.0MM - 9,999,999	6.250	6.500	6.625	6.750
10 million and up	6.500	6.750	7.000	7.250

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Vehicle sales down 1.3% in January

By Abigail L. Ho

VEHICLE sales in January hit 6,654 units, down by 1.2 percent from the 6,734 units sold in the same month last year, documents from the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) showed.

Last month's total sales also represented an 18 percent drop from the December sales figure of 8,147 units.

Commercial vehicles, which include Isuzu cargo trucks, light commercial vehicles, light trucks and buses, contributed 3,847 units to total vehicle sales in January.

Compared with the January 2004 figure, the number of commercial vehicles sold this year dropped by 7 percent from 4,135 units.

Commercial vehicle sales last month plunged 24.5 percent from the December sales figure of 5,094 units.

Campi attributed the slowdown in commercial vehicle sales last month to the slight decline in AEV sales, the delay in delivery of completely built-up units, some pending softening economy, and the unavailability of stock for selected models.

Year-on-year AUV sales showed a 11-percent decline, with 1,505 units sold last month as compared with 1,813 units sold in January 2004.

From December last year to January this year, SUV sales dropped 22 percent because of the effect of the new excise tax law as well as the falling demand for gasoline-run models.

Passenger car sales, on the other hand, jumped 7.6 percent to 2,787 units compared with last year's 2,590 units sold.

Campi said the strong seller during this period was brought by the introduction of new models into the market during the last half of 2004. These new models were the Toyota Vios 1.3 model and the BMW 1 series.

Compared with December sales of 5,063 units, however, January sales represented an 8.7-percent decline. Coming off a high-pump-powered sales push, January is traditionally a slow month for the automotive industry.

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FOR ASIA

Mirant revives plan to go public

Corp., wherein the government retained a 40-percent stake in the oil firm, while selling 40 percent to Enron investors and 20 percent to the public through an IPO.

The government, through PNOC-EDC parent firm PNOC, holds 18 billion shares in PNOC-EDC. The PNOC board has granted PNOC-EDC the authority to boost these existing shares to 19 billion through the issuance of 5 billion new shares.

PNOC will also be selling 4 billion of its existing PNOC-EDC shares.

Combining the 1 billion new shares with the 4 million old shares to be sold, there would then be 5 billion shares that would be made available to private entities and to the public.

Of the 19 billion, 6 billion, or 40 percent of the total 15 billion PNOC-EDC shares, would be sold through a private placement.

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bassé-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 1BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

SLOW-COOKED lamb shanks

The latest innovations of chef Vicky Rose Pacheco celebrates good food, togetherness and camaraderie

TANGUIS Amandine

Menu makeover marks resto's 17th year

CHATEAU 1771 has come up with a major menu modification to celebrate its 17th anniversary.

Its new offerings include an entire verti-different theme that encourage food sharing.

The latest innovations of chef Vicky Rose Pacheco, granddaughter of the legendary restaurateur "Mama Sita" Reyes, celebrates not just good food but also togetherness and camaraderie.

Chateau 1771's set menus include a pasta and salad set; a healthy high fiber selection; an Italian menu; a fish and seafood assembly; and a collection of chicken entrees.

Here are some recipes from the restaurant's menu:

Slow-cooked lamb shanks

4 pcs lamb shank, whole
1 tsp rock salt
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
2 tsp fresh rosemary, chopped
1 ½ tsp fresh oregano
1 cup flour
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tsp garlic, chopped
3 pcs carrots, quartered and finely sliced
3 stalks celery, in halves, finely sliced
3 pcs red onions, finely chopped
½ tsp rock salt
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
½ cup dry white wine
6 fillets anchovies, drained, chopped
2 pcs cans crushed plum tomatoes
2 ½ purified water

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Rub the shanks all around with salt and pepper. Combine the rosemary and oregano and roll the shanks in the mixture, pressing firmly. Dust with flour and set aside.

Film a roasting pan with olive oil and heat on stove. Brown the meat on both sides, then remove from the pan. Add the garlic, carrots, celery and onions and cook until softened, stirring occasionally. Season with salt. Add balsamic vinegar and reduce to a syrup.

Pour the white wine and simmer for two minutes. Add the anchovies and mix. Add the crushed tomatoes and water. Return the lamb to the pan, cover it and cook in oven for approximately 1½ hours at 350°F.

When lamb meat is tender, re

CHEF Vicky Rose Pacheco

LARRY'S King Sandwich

TENDERLOIN Steak Sandwich

CHILI CON Sotsidy

MUSHROOM Pizzini

Is it a sandwich or is it a meal?

THE LIC group has created seven sandwiches to make merienda—or even a light meal—more interesting.

These are: S.R.L.T. (Shrimp, Bacon, Lettuce, and Tomato on Toast), P350; Bruschetta Asian Quesong Puti (pesto, garlic, and black olives on farmer's bread), P350; Beef Salpicao on Toast (tender beef salpicao with fresh arugula on farmer's bread with aioli sauce), P225; Tenderloin Steak Sandwich (grilled beef tenderloin with red and green bell peppers, onions, and caramelized shower on baguette), P275; and Chili con Schnitzig (German sausage with chili con carne, grilled potatoes and mozzarella cheese on farmer's bread), P225; and Mediterranean Pita Sandwich (Mediterranean ratatouille bread sauce with romaine and pita wedges dusted), P180. Hans and Fritz Quiosa grill, Bonifacio High Street Sans and caramelized cheese on toasted farmer's bread served with tomatoes, cucumbers, and onion salad with pesto balsamic dressing), P275; and Larry King's Sandwich (pan-grilled chicken breast wheat bread with caesar sauce and alfalfa sprouts), P275.

H&H and Swiss Cheese with Pinas Balsamico

Learn Italian cooking—and history

H&H Kitchen will take you on a historical exploration of Italian food once on "Italian Sampler" 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Feb. 12.

Learn how to prepare Italian classics from the simple Lasagna, Cannelloni, Ravioli, and Fettuccine al fresco to gastronomical delights such as Pesto, Parmesan and Carbonara.

In the afternoon, 12:30-5 p.m., learn pizza dough and sauce recipes in "Pizza-Pizza." Learn how to prepare Chicago-style, Deep-pan Pizza, Mediterranean Stuffed Pizza Turnovers and No-bake Pizza. Class will cover toppings with estimated costing.

"Pasta! Mediagni" covers Fettuccine, Lasagna, Sans Ravel, Penne, Rotini de Mediterr, Linguine Mediagni Pie and Meringue Cookies.

On Feb. 13-20, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., "Cooking I" will be offered. The course will cover proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutritious and nutritional cooking; stocks, soups and sauces and their 1001 applications to poultry, fish, shellfish, fruits and vegetables; common herbs and spices; purchasing; marketing and proper storage areas planning; simple garnishes and plate presentation.

Five, actual cooking workshop will cover the preparation of dishes from appetizer to dessert.

H2O Kitchen, "Baking I" will cover the basics of baking including techniques in preparation of bread, quick-bread, pies, cakes and more. Free cookbook will be given to parties' parent.

Interested parties may visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays-Saturdays), 619 Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City, or call 893-1195 or 892-9128 (11 to 1:00. Or you may also send e-mail to salesbureau@maya.info.com.ph.

Caribbean and orgasmic cooking

THE HEGGIE Aspirin School of Culinary Arts is offering the following classes:

Feb. 11 Caribbean Cooking 101, Bar 2 (all specials—Rum Daiquiris, Authentic rum n n Cubana, Jerk Chicken with Mango Salsa, Grilled Crabs with Lime and Mango Butter, Coconut Shrimp Stew, Rum Pudding, Rum and Fruit Punch).

Feb. 12 Chicken Wings—The Ultimate Buffalo, "Beyond" Burgers with Roasted Tomato Sauce and Spicy Chili, Garlic with Garlic Sauce, Beauty and Joy, Maple Teriyaki with chicken, drinks, dessert.

Feb. 14 Orgasmic Desserts for Two—Aztec Beef (all aztec—Cook your own dinner—For One Cook Closely Skewered and Basted with Teriyaki Sauce and Tender Slices of Grilled Rube Beef served with three sauces (wondering sides and garlic), Bonza recipe: Rube Beef Sukiyaki)

Feb. 26, Noodles (all aztec)—Cuisine: The Dish Noodles, My Decadent Pesto Granola, Adding Fruit to Black Glass Noodles with Garlic Olive Oil, Sukiyaki Style, Fried Scallop Noodles, Shredded Noodles with Angus Beef and Mushrooms.

Call 9209599, 9378008, 6111852, and 0917-6999999.

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Via Mare
Where food memories begin

Processed food will be more nutritious

THE CONSUMER
Marietta Velasco Gaw

WE still cannot understand why it takes a very long time before a new law is fully implemented. The massive food fortification law, for example, was signed in November 2000 but mandatory compliance took effect only last November.

Supposedly, the law which requires the addition of micronutrients to processed food, is the government's response to the problem of micronutrient deficiency in the country.

Whatever the reasons, we're only too happy to put on the green flag, with the full implementation of the food fortification program, guaranteed. Food consumers can be expected to be fortified with micronutrients lacking in the Filipino diet—Vitamin A, iron, and iodine.

Specifically, the law requires that basic staples like flour, sugar, and edible oil should be enriched with Vitamin A, and/or with iron.

We have high hopes that the food fortification program of the government will complement the existing Anti-Iron and Oil Sampling Flour Seal Program.

The new law requires the addition of iodine to salt. Under the Iodized Salt Program, manufacturers who voluntarily fortify their products with micronutrients get a diamond-shaped seal stamped on their packages.

By the way, micronutrients are vitamins and minerals that the body needs only in small quantities but are essential for physical and mental health. Malnutrition is a major concern in developing countries where people lack access to proper food.

The most prevalent type of malnutrition is micronutrient deficiency. Children below six years old and members of reproductive age are the most affected groups.

The massive food fortification program is a joint endeavor of the Department of Health, the United Nations Children's Fund, United States Agency for International Development, and Asian Development Bank.

Surviving a tire blowout

Presence of mind and good reflexes can save the day.

Angeles Arcon is a veteran accident adjuster. In fact, a Filipino's 2,000 to 3,000 accidents he has attended to during his 25 years in the business.

"I thought this beyond my comprehension after high performance driving. To this day, I cannot explain why it exploded! The tire is beyond repair now," he said.

Angeles advises other motorists to carry—aside from driving and anti-panic values at the explosion.

TV's influence

Comment from an overall reader: "Mrs. Gaw, I am a regular viewer of your TV program. I have noticed that you have been using Colgate toothpaste for a long time. Are you being paid by Colgate to endorse their product?"

Answer: No, I am not being paid by Colgate to endorse their product. I have been using Colgate toothpaste for a long time because I like it. I have been using it since I was a child. I have been using it since I was a child. I have been using it since I was a child.

CBN and GMA networks closed late yesterday to reach their salaries GMRC or good moral and right conduct. I noticed, for example, that some people in TV productions and hosts of top-rated programs showed not the liberty of endorsing or leasing the cheeks of friends commercials.

The reader gave the following advice to television personalities:

- Make hosts of TV shows should keep their hands off product commercials and guests unless the situation calls for it.
- Ay should be a big No to make fun of a person's physical defect, handicap, gender.
- They should not talk when their mouths are full of food; neither should they chew gum in front of the camera.
- It is bad manners to point a finger at the face of a person or at the camera lens.

A teacher and former principal of a private school asked us to tell the television and radio station personalities in radio-TV talk. She commented: "The teacher in me refuses to keep silent when I hear wrong pronunciation—grammar, or in broadcasting talk. Many to the point, the word feature in the MV list of 40 feature reader should be pronounced with a silent R and a short A."

On this issue, a journalist friend has been wanting to call the attention of a woman announcer of a FM radio station who keeps using "another sets of light cash."

Prompt response

Thanks to the following for promptly taking care of the complaint of a reader regarding the delayed delivery of the Bolex cell phone he sent as a gift transmitted in Baguio City: Pia Rosario Cruz (by telephone text), Ged Mortal (manager, Baguio Wireless Center), and Tarzan Concepcion (marketing center).

Our special thanks to Lee Bernal of Tekki Company for the technical support and assistance in our troubled efforts to newly reformatted computer software, and to macho person Darryl Rosete for his expert comment about computer and virus program.

Send e-mail to marietagaw@hotmail.com

SPAGHETTI with roasted tomatoes

Menu makeover marks resto's 17th year

Pressagne C1

move the lid and cook for 20 minutes more. Skim off fat and taste then adjust seasoning. Serves 6.

Spaghetti with Roasted Tomatoes

Preheat oven at 350°F.

Roasted Tomatoes

½ K ripe cherry tomatoes, halved
8 cloves whole garlic, unpeeled
¼ c extra virgin olive oil
2 sprigs fresh thyme or ½ tsp dried thyme leaves
salt to taste
freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a bowl, toss together tomatoes, olive oil, salt, pepper and thyme. Then in a roasting pan or baking sheet, place the tomatoes cut side down, in neat rows. Pour olive oil over and scatter the garlic.

Roast the tomatoes until the skin can be peeled off effortlessly. Take off the skin, lower the heat to 275°F and continue to roast until semi-dry. Save the drippings.

Prepare a pot of boiling water for the pasta to be blanched right before it is tossed. You must have a strainer with long handle or a colander.

To make the topping:

2/3 c roasted tomatoes
4 pcs roasted garlic, peeled but whole
salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
Sugar to taste
Roasted Tomato Drippings

Combine roasted tomatoes and roasted garlic in a saucepan over low heat.

Season with salt, pepper and sugar. Don't make it sweet. Pour roasted tomato drippings in moderate but not to make dish saucy. Set aside.

Cooking the Pasta

2 tsp garlic, chopped
¼ c tbsp extra virgin olive oil
200 g spaghetti, cooked al dente
Salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tbsp grated parmesan cheese
1 sprig basil

In sauté pan, brown the garlic. Blanch the pasta quickly in boiling water, shake off excess water, and add to the pan, stirring briskly while breaking the pasta. Season with salt and pepper. Turn off the fire and add the 1 tbsp parmesan cheese. Taste and adjust seasoning. Transfer to a pasta bowl. Heat the roasted tomato topping and top the pasta with it.

Garnish with a basil sprig. Add parmesan cheese if desired. Serves 3.

Tarigue Amandine

200 g tanigue, loin cut, skinless, boneless, cut into 4
1 ½ tsp black peppercorn, crushed coarsely
1 ½ tsp white or green or red peppercorn, crushed coarsely
½ tsp salt
1 tbsp corn oil
2 tbsp butter, softened
1 tsp yellow lemon juice
4 tbsp toasted slivered almonds
salt to taste
freshly ground black pepper to taste

Pat the fish pieces dry. Mix the two kinds of peppercorn. Put the peppercorn mix on both sides of the fish pieces, and do the same with the salt. You don't have to use all the pepper and salt.

Heat oil in a frying pan. When oil is hot, add the fish in one layer. Cook on medium heat until both sides are browned but not overcooked. Place fish on serving dish when done. In the same pan, melt the butter over low heat (do not boil) then add the lemon juice.

Add the almonds and mix. Turn off the fire immediately and season with salt and pepper. Serves 2.

Opportunity knocks but once.
JOB Market

Distinctive and dazzling character...

IDEALE

LUCERNE

JAEGER-LECOULTRE

Cirkulo's special menu for Valentine

CIRKULO will serve a special set menu on Feb. 12-14. The menu: Pan-fried Duck Liver on Stack with Balsamic Vinegar Syrup; Gorgonzola and Apple Salad with Mesclun Greens and Walnuts; Choice of Pan Fried Apalup Fillet with Capre Beurre Blanc or Slow Roasted US Beef Belly with Garlic and Black Pepper Cream, Portobello Mushrooms, Balsamic Shallots; and White Peanut Butter Chocolate Truffle Cake with Glazed Bananas and Banana Caramel Ice Cream, its February Specials include: Wagyu Ground Beef Pie in Five Divided US Wagyu Beef Belly, Baby Vegetables, Beef Bouldi, Foie Gras Sandwich (Duck Liver Terrine, Crispy Parma Ham, Fig Jam, Toasted Brioche), Garlic Egg and Asparagus (Crispy Arroz Ibot mix and Imported Bolded Fiderus Alicantina Chorizo Seafood Paella, Baby Pi'nocha, Mussels, Clams, Saffron); Exotic Mushrooms on Spaghetti (Mix of the Woods, Shitake, and Enoki Mushrooms with Olive Oil, Garlic, Sweet Onions, Chilli); PSB Pitcha Chocolate Cake, Peanut Butter and Chocolate Cream, Caramel Rimmed, Sticky Caramel Nut (Chocolate Hazelnut, Chef Spice Ganache, Sea Salt); and Orange Ice Cream "Drumstick". House-made Orange Ice Cream, Collebrae Liquid Chocolate Crunch, Orange Butter Sauce, Pistaffe "Cone"). Cirkulo is at 888 Pano Road, Makati. Call 8186733/8102765.

Sing for a free Valentine dinner

RED Box Karaoke at the third level of Greenbelt 5, Ayala Center, Makati City, is offering customers free dinner buffet as part of its Valentine's Day treat.

The buffet will include cheesy Baked Mussels, Penne Pomodoro, Steamed Chicken with Orange, Mojo Potatoes and Jacaloo Rice.

For Valentine, Red Box Karaoke has a new cocktail, "Strawberry Tease", that is good for two. It combines the flavor of fresh strawberries, lemon juice and vodka. Guests get to bring home a personally-sized margarita glass. Red Box Karaoke (757-4388) is open daily 12 noon to 3 a.m.

QUESO-GAMBAS Gravoss

BEEF Roll Ups

GROUPER with Lemon Grass, served with pasta

Fine dining goes to the mall

Carafe's owners believe that just because you're in a shopping center doesn't mean you only have to eat at the food court

Text by Margie Bago-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

IF you happen to be at Shangri-La Plaza Mall and suddenly find that your tummy is asking to be filled, why not try Carafe (pronounced Kuruf) at the fourth level, right across Fantasia's Department Store?

The restaurant has an interesting array of appetizers, soups and salads, pastas, main dishes and dessert, not to mention an extensive list of coffee and wines.

"Our food is a selection of Eastern and Western dishes. It's a mix of French, Italian and Filipino specialties, which may sound familiar but are given a different twist. But it's not fusion cuisine. It's something different, and we simply call it executive global cuisine," says Mia Florencio, one of the owner-partners of Carafe. (French for "wine decanter.")

Only a month and a half old, Carafe is a place for casual fine dining in the heart of a mall. It offers food that is fresh and interesting, yet very simple.

The place is a joint project of good friends Hanks Fegebin, JC Cruz, Robert Castañeda, and siblings Sally, Mia and Tessy Florencio, who are well-known in the jewelry and watch business.

As the restaurant's managing partner, Mia Florencio handles the daily operations and other administrative needs, while Fegebin takes care of the kitchen.

Opened the day after Christmas, you'll find Carafe packed mid-afternoons, young and old alike, since afternoon fun-and-shoppers, and even those who simply want to hang out and kill time in the mall, have lunch, afternoon snacks or dinner here.

"On weekends, families, especially those who go to the supermarket, packed our place," Florencio says.

Carafe's is an elegant and cozy place where one can savor delicious meals even in a casual setting. "You just because you're in a mall, you have to settle for aluminum chairs and plastic tables (and) so-so dishes. Shangri-La is a classy mall. Here (at Carafe), you can have good food, good service and perfect ambience after a day of shopping," says Florencio.

She adds executives with business meetings in a mall would rather choose a quieter place than the busy food court.

At Carafe, tables and chairs in dark wood are set at comfortable distances from each other. The place has stylized stained glass around the kitchen area. The atmosphere at engagement is definitely conducive to a relaxing meal.

Signature dishes

At Carafe, you get Beef Roll Ups (P375) that consist of beef pastries and assorted greens, wrapped in tortilla and blended with wasabi sauce dressing. The pasta old chicken adobo, shiitake(sp) Adobo à la Carafe (P355), is fun-pinay and cooked with basil and sun-dried tomatoes.

Carafe's Braised Lamb Chop (P550) is served with fagioli's special thick chili garlic sauce. The lamb is without the smell and after-taste that make the meat a no-no for some people.

The popular paella has been transformed into a delicious pasta sensation. Pasta Salpaella (P320), instead of arborio rice, it was linguini with tomato sauce, shellfish, chicken and chorizo de bilbao.

Another interesting item on the menu is the Inihaw-nyan salad. This inspired Grouper with Lemon Grass (P380), steamed grouper fillet cooked in a little olive oil with tomato sauce and lemon grass.

For dessert there is Coco-Nut (P95), a moist dark tsa cooked in fresh coconut milk and chocolate sauce. Panna Cotta (P150) is vanilla bean pastry cream with light caramel syrup while Chocolate Fondue (P380) is seasonal fruits served with dark chocolate fondue.

As it prepares for its formal opening this month, Carafe is expanding its menu, offering more salads, sandwiches, pasta and meat dishes. Even its list of beverages that includes fresh fruit juices, soda, coffee (Lanares, Italy's No. 1 coffee) and wine will also be expanded.

E-mail the author at <rbago@inquirer.com.ph>.

PASTA Espanola

COCO-NUT

ACCORD a la Carafe

GARDEN Fruit Salad

BRAISED Lamb Chop

MANAGING partner Mia Florencio handles the daily operations of Carafe.

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

Text us your feedback: inquirer life name/ city/ message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

My kind of cookbook

COOKBOOKS are a tricky subject and I am often asked for my recommendations. There are now so many that they will probably start selling for a dime a dozen. Some have the prettiest pictures you can almost frame them and hang in your walls.

THE COOKBOOK produced by the ICA Parent Auxiliary Council is a must-have for every cooking aficionado, even us, professional cooks.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

What should a cookbook do and how do you choose a good one? The pictures help but many books I would categorize as mere "inspirational/reference material."

For me a good cookbook is one that is written with utmost simplicity. If it contains heirloom and comfort food recipes and tips, then it is worth keeping. Like any other book, a cookbook should not be judged by its cover.

Marnie Ong and the ladies of the ICA (Immaculate Conception Academy) Parent Auxiliary Council formed a culinary club. The club meets for cooking lessons conducted by culinary professionals and other homemakers. I was invited a couple of times to take part in this activity. Many members were my students for many years and, believe me, they are, on their own right, no mean cooks themselves.

From this regular activity, a cookbook was born, a compilation of over 200 recipes from all over the world, each recipe drawing inspiration from a number of sources. Many are contributions from homemakers who have revised well-kept family secrets. The rest were contributed by people in the industry—Chefs Mauro Arjona, Gene Gonzales, George Lizares, not to forget me, and many others.

As I browsed through the book, I saw many recipes of interest, many of them frequently requested by readers such as Food for the Gods, Chocolate Crinkles, Paella, Traditional Birthday *Misua*, Pan-Fried Goose Liver, *Laing*, *Pandan* Chicken, *Salpicao*, French Onion Soup, and my Roast Stuffed Turkey.

If you ask me, this is a must-have book for every cooking aficionado, even us, professional cooks!

Proceeds from sale of the cookbook will go to the Grant-in-Aid Program of ICA that assists deserving students and children of teachers and employees of the school, who need financial aid (Kathlyn Ong, 0917-8988833).

The season of Lent is again upon us. I don't really know if that no-meat restriction on Fridays is still in effect. I personally think it's harder to be and do good than not eat meat, especially if you're eating *Bacalao* or Sea Bass. Marites Ingles (0917-5267249) is offering whole Chilean Sea Bass for a song—her Lenten Special at P800 a kilo. Fish range in size from 600 grams to two kilos.

Brownie-ing without oven

I'm Anne, a student of SLU (St. Louis University) Baguio. I just want to ask for a recipe for making brownies without using an oven.

Wow, how hard *naman*! My dear, I am not God! Make French toast *na lang*! Here it is, one of my favorite recipes, stuffed with apples or bananas and using croissant instead of regular loaf bread, though loaf bread may also be used.

Diego's French Toast

Batter:
3 large eggs
¼ c milk
1/8 c cream
½ tsp vanilla extract
A pinch of ground cinnamon
Stuffing:
1/3 c sugar
3 tbsp butter
4 bananas or 1 apple, sliced
½ c pure maple syrup
A pinch of cinnamon
3 tbsp butter, for frying
4 large croissants, halved lengthwise
Confectioner's sugar, for dusting
Ground cinnamon, for dusting
Maple syrup
Cooked bacon, ham or fresh fruits (strawberries, etc.) as accompaniment

· Combine batter ingredients, mix well.

· Combine stuffing ingredients in a saucepan and cook fruits until soft.

· Put sandwich filling between croissant halves.

· Melt butter in a pan.

· Dip croissant in batter, fry bread until golden.

· Dust with powdered sugar and cinnamon.

· Serve with maple syrup and bacon, ham or fruit on the side.

Family favorite

Please give me a recipe for chili crabs. I love them and so do my kids but we can't afford to keep (going to) restaurants (for them).

ALDY

Here is a recipe from one of my mentors in Nonya and Singaporean cuisine, Violet Oon. When we did ours, we used lobsters. Delicious! Adjust sugar and chilies according to your taste.

½ k crabs (I like *bakla*; Violex in Farmer's sells great *baklas*—washed, claws cracked)
5 cloves garlic, though I use ½ cup
6 red chilies, not *labuyo* but the long, red Thai or Padi chilies (Lolita's and Zeny's, Farmer's)
2 stalks spring onions, cut into 2-inch lengths
1 coriander plant, cut into 2-inch lengths
3 tbsp vegetable oil
Sauce:
1 c water
3 tbsp tomato ketchup (I use 4)
1 tsp pounded brown or yellow salted soya bean (*taucheo*, available at Lolita's, Farmer's)
1 ½ tsp cornstarch
¼ tsp dark soy sauce
1 ½ tbsp sugar, to taste
salt, to taste
½ tsp vinegar, preferably rice vinegar or lime juice

· Pound garlic & chilies

· Mix all sauce ingredients except vinegar or lime juice

· Heat wok, add oil. When hot, add pounded garlic and chilies

· Add crab and stir-fry until crabs change color.

· Add sauce and let simmer for 5-7 minutes

· Add vinegar.

· Season to taste

· Add green onions and coriander.

Spanish culinary terms, Part 3

Degustacion - tasting
Desayuno - breakfast
Dulce - sweet
Empanada - savory pastry from Galicia
Ensalada - salad
Ensaimada - cake from Mallorca
Entradas - starters

For comments or suggestions, text 0917-8399888.

TO MAKE crust, place Graham crackers, cinnamon, sugar and margarine in a bowl. Mix well. Transfer crumb mixture to a 9-inch tart pan with removable bottom pan.

PRESS crust mixture evenly over bottom and up sides of the tart pan. Chill for 30 minutes.

FOR the filling, whip all-purpose cream until stiff. Set aside.

FOLD whipped cream into the strawberry cream cheese mixture.

MEANWHILE, dissolve unflavored gelatin in milk over low fire and add to cream/cheese mixture.

BEAT strawberry cream cheese and sugar until light and fluffy.

POUR into crumb lined pan, cover and chill for at least three hours.

ONCE set, pipe edges with whipped cream.

CUT jellyace gelatin into small cubes. Top cheesecake with gelatin.

Love in Strawberry Fields

Text by Margie Biagio-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

If YOU are planning a home-cooked dinner to mark Valentine's Day, make things easy for yourself so you can have the energy and time to enjoy being with your loved one.

A delicious home-cooked dinner need not involve hours of hard work. You can ease the workload with this hassle-free Valentine's Day dessert. Strawberry Fields Cheesecake is a no-bake cheesecake using sun-fresh strawberries but store-bought strawberry-flavored gelatin.

"The gelatin cut into small pieces has a good texture in your mouth. It is refreshing and will melt in your mouth," says Carrie Madrid, product application specialist of San Miguel Pure Foods. "Besides, gelatin, like Jellyace, is readily available even at your neighborhood sari-sari store." And cheesecake is one classic dessert people never tire of.

Although this no-bake version is simpler and does not take a lot of time to make, it is just as rich, dense, creamy and divinely as the more complicated versions. It's also ideal for those who do not have ovens at home.

For Strawberry Fields Cheesecake, instead of regular cream cheese, the Magnolia strawberry cream cheese spread is used.

Madrid suggests arranging the cheesecake on a pretty platter or tiered cake stand. It should be served in small portions, as it is a very rich dessert.

STEP BY STEP

Ingredients

For crust:

3 ½-c Graham cracker crumbs
¼ tsp cinnamon powder (optional)
2 tbsp sugar
1/3 c Magnolia Baker's Best Margarine, melted

For filling:

1 bottle Magnolia Strawberry Cream Cheese Spread
¼ c sugar
1 tbsp unflavored gelatin, dissolved in 3 tbsp Magnolia Fresh Milk
1 c all-purpose cream, chilled

For topping:

Strawberry flavored Jellyace
Whipped Cream

for suggestions, e-mail mbiagi@inquirer.com.ph.

CUT strawberry gelatin into small cubes. Top cheesecake with gelatin.

STRAWBERRY Fields No-Bake Cheesecake

Perfect date awaits 1,000 couples

NESTLE Coffee-Mate gives couples in love a chance to experience a new kind of television treat.

About 1,000 couples will be treated to what could be their most romantic date in Coffee-Mate's "Perfect Mate, Perfect Date" dinner party at 6 p.m., Feb. 12, at SM Megamall B Open Parking-C, Mandaluyong City.

The event will also bring together the largest number of dating couples in one venue at the same time.

Participating couples will have a complimentary six-hour dinner. Entertainment will be provided by popular artists. Aurelio catering will provide the food and drinks for the candlelit dinner. After dinner coffee will be served in a ceremonial manner by Coffee-Mate.

Featured performers are Dan Zac Bellis, Jaya, M.T.M.E, Barbie's Cradle, Blahatnic and the Pinoy Pop Superstar finalists.

The evening will also have raffle draws and other special surprises for the dating couples.

Nestle Philippines celebrates the love month through Coffee-Mate, which is acknowledged by many coffee drinkers today as the perfect mate for their coffee. This is all about celebrating with our loved one by giving him or her a perfect date," says Leslie Co-Alarcon, brand manager of Nestle Philippines.

The evening will have 12 Love Web partners, wherein couples will educate and tablet balloons as they make their wishes. Though it may sound corny to others, they will also simultaneously shout the words "I love You" loud enough for everyone to hear to show their affection for their date.

Husband-and-wife Dawn and Dianne Olivar, the evening's hosts, will lead the crowd.

Well, those who have followed the series of Coffee-Mate television commercials featuring Montalta basketball star Alex Compton and model Tessa Prieto will see the next installment of the series that will be launched during the event.

Winners of the "Text What's Next" promo will be announced. The top prize is an Aston Cruise. The promo asked TV viewers what happens next in the TV "relationship" of Compton and Prieto.

"Perfect Mate, Perfect Date" will be opened to walk-in couples aged 18 years and above. Each has to have a box top of Coffee-Mate to register. Registration starts at 10 a.m. and the opening ceremonies will be at 6 p.m. Only the first 1,000 couples will be accepted.